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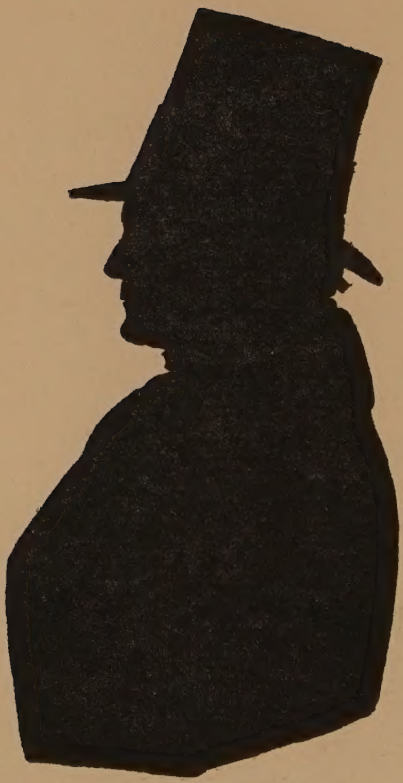

THE "IRON LORD."

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Echoes of Exmoor

A Record

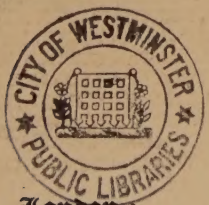
OF THE

DISCUSSIONS AND DOINGS OF THE MEN-OF-EXMOOR CLUB

UNDER THE EYE OF

A SPECTATOR

Second Series



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FOREWORD

To the Second Series of "Echoes of Exmoor."

I HAVE received a number of letters from the kind readers of the First Series, some of them through the Publishers, some through various Members of the Men-of-Exmoor Club, and some through my kind friend the Rector of Charles. The questions they ask I have tried to answer, the flattering compliments they have bestowed upon me I will try to live up to, and the general favour with which the book has been received I will do my best to keep alive. For there is a lot more to be said.

His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales has very graciously accepted a copy of this book, which in itself is an encouraging distinction, but which may also mean that the Prince *intends to visit the Stag-hunting* in the Forest when his engagements permit. I notice that some responsible Committees and Corporations around Exmoor, as well as the Press, have taken up and repeated my loud sighs for the Royal presence upon the Moors, and there is no doubt that this invitation will sooner or later have the desired effect.

Editor, "*Echoes of Exmoor.*"

March, 1924.

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CITY OF WESTMINSTER PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Echoes of Exmoor.

I.

THE "IRON LORD" OF THE BRENDON HILLS

"Quenched is the (iron) golden Statue's ray,
The breath of Heaven has blown away
What toiling earth had piled,
Scattering wise heart and crafty hand
As breezes strew on ocean's sand
The fabrics of a child."

—*Keble.*

IT is generally known that attempts have been made from time to time to commercialize the wilds of Exmoor and to turn this expanse of untouched and unturned nature into a means of making money. The Economist and the man of business have no doubt met with many sorrows on account of the hopeless failures that have up to now attended all efforts of this kind, for the lover of Romantic Nature has not only been left to pursue his cult in peaceful devotion, but the attempts themselves have opened to his view new vistas of glory in the stories of the victories of his insulted mistress.

One of these at least is worth recording, for it was the most serious of them all, in that it stretched over the middle and last half of the nineteenth century, almost fitting into the limits of Victoria's reign, and for some time seemed to obliterate with chimney-stacks, pumping-houses, rail-roads and inclines, the beauties of that part of Exmoor called the Brendon Hills. If this project had succeeded

altogether, there is little doubt but that the whole of the Forest would by now have been forsaken by traveller and red-deer alike, for smoke and the smell of iron-ore would have effectually driven them out, and the landscape would have resembled that of the Black-country or the West Riding around Sheffield. But " Oh, Lucifer, Star of the morning, how fallen art thou ! " Man's project once more offended Nature beyond the limits of endurance, and she cast him off, perhaps never to be pacified again. But the quarrel, like all warfare, resulted in pathos and pitifulness on both sides, as the story will show.

When my Father was a boy about eleven years of age, he crossed the Brendon Hills from Wheddon Cross to Elworthy Burrows, a distance of fifteen miles, on his Exmoor pony, and not a house or building of any kind was to be seen, and scarce a living soul to be met. By the time he was fifty, there had sprung up two large villages, one at " Goosemore " and the other called " Brendon Hill," with a considerable population in each. He lived on into his ninth decade, and one of his last rides was that which he had ridden seventy-five years before, to see the hills once more as he had seen them in his youth, without inhabitant or place of abode from one end to the other—sheep were again grazing on the rail-roads, and the pumping-houses had become heaps of stones. It is the story of this transitory prevalence and complete evanescence, that I wish now to tell.

It would appear that in the early Nineteenth Century, iron became increasingly dear, and more and more use was made of it ; and it had been for some time known that this metal existed on Exmoor and its spurs. Implements for iron mining used by the Romans were found at Treborough and Luxborough. Frequently large lumps of ore had come

to the surface in agriculture, in burial grounds, and in the sinking of wells for water and quarries for stone. Mr. John Knight was well aware of the existence of iron on the Forest itself, for he paid a good sum for the mining rights on the Acland and Bampfylde allotments. His son, Mr. Frederick Knight, entered into agreements with at least three large Companies on the West of the Moors, and they commenced experimental operations and made plans, and the marks of their excavations can still be seen between Simonsbath and Lynton ; but there was no such obstinacy about their enterprise as that displayed upon the Brendon Hills, and it does not belong to our story at present. There was, however, a beautiful piece of ore sent to the Great Exhibition in 1851 from a farm between Brendon Village and Simonsbath, which attracted international attention to the wealth of iron on these hills. This lump of ore was examined among others by a partner in a firm of Ironworks in Ebbw Vale, and thus it became the first unconscious origin of the great drama of the Brendon Hills. For he connected this lump of ore with the high-lands that he could see from his native county, and not with the more Western Brendon of the Forest. His firm had been purchasing small consignments of iron ore from the owners of the land on the Brendon Hills, but its quality was so poor that it was decided to stop it. This lump, however, led him to believe that material of a better qaulity could be found. He went across the Severn Sea and spent a holiday there, with the result that experimental work was taken in hand which led to his purchase of the mining rights around the two parishes of Luxborough and Withiel Flory, and up-to-date operations began.

This iron magnate became known in the neighbourhood as the " Iron Lord " and from the accounts of him that I

have heard, he was a remarkable person. His father is said to have risen straight from the mining ranks of Ebbw Vale. He was a man of great stature, towering over the heads of all he met, and his heart and brain were in proportion to his body. As he was walking up Road Lane to the Brendon Hills for the first time, he overtook one of those two wheeled carts by which the ore was then conveyed to Watchet. The farmers of those barren times were glad of the laborious work of hauling the ore to eke out their meagre maintenance. This cart was driven by a little auburn-haired blue-eyed boy of eleven years of age clothed in mended rags, and was filled with lime for the return journey. The day was hot, and he watched the lad lie down and drink the water from the ruts to quench his thirst, and when they came to a stiff place in the hill the little fellow was so touched with sympathy for his mute companion in the cart that he pushed with all his little might behind the load. Again and again the old mare would stop to take breath. Then he would quickly trig up the wheels with two stones he carried along with him for the purpose, and throwing his arms round the old animal's neck weep tears of sympathy and speak loving words of comfort and encouragement to the good old creature who seemed to understand him well ; and thus by hard and painful stages the long hill was won. None of this touching little scene was lost upon the " Iron Lord " who watched it unnoticed in a gateway. Tears stood in his great handsome eyes as he looked on and smiled. He remembered by what hard stages his own father had risen to the top—how at nine years of age he was taken down the mines to drive the ponies, and how his own career had been made easy and affluent by the early efforts of his sire.

He went up to the boy and enquired his name and where

he lived. His questions elicited the information that his ancestors had owned Baron's Down and the largest part of Kingsbrompton parish, but that extravagant living and bad times had brought them to poverty; that his widowed mother could with hard work barely exist upon the mortgaged last remnant of their landed estate and that he and his old mare "Blossom" went out hauling iron ore to help keep the home together.

It was with no superficial sentiment that the "Iron Lord" handed him a golden tip, patted him on the head, and went away from this interview.

"We shall meet again some day," he said, as he walked on. And he fulfilled his prophecy, for more will be heard of the touching of these two lives in the Story of the mines.

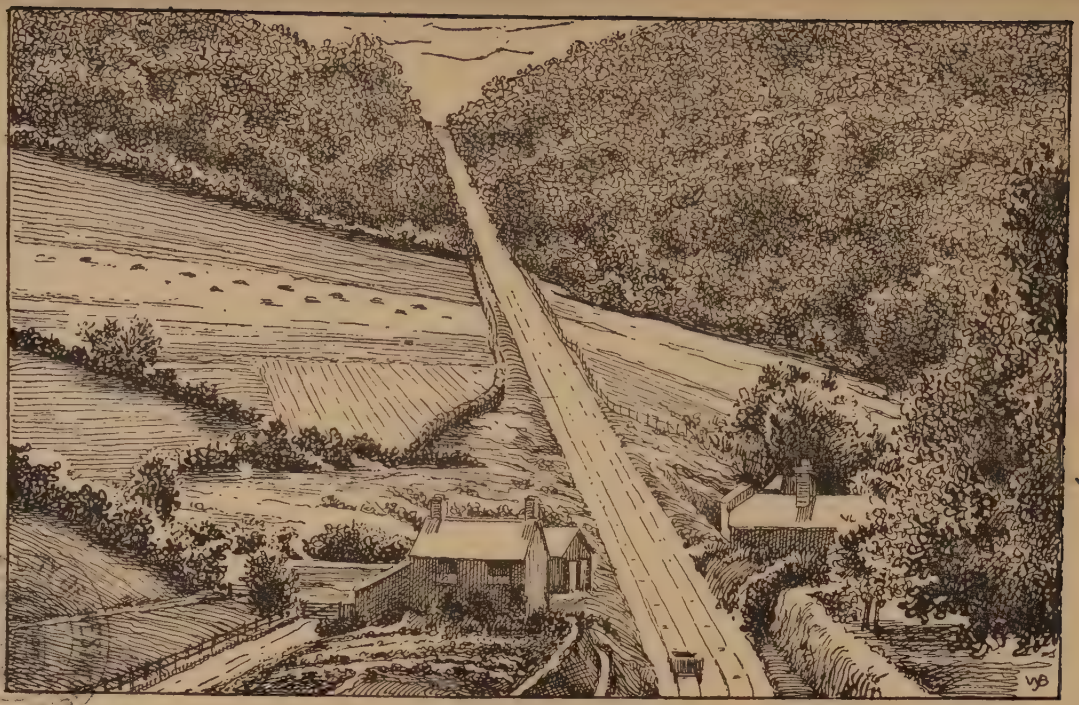
II.

All went on well with the enterprise guided by the Iron Lord's genius for construction and order and thrift. Deep shafts were driven in at Brendon Hill, Keynsham, and Goosemoor. An incline was made with the height of a thousand feet from Combe Row to Brendon Hill, a mineral line constructed from Combe Row to Watchet, and another joined on from the incline top to Goosemoor. Smaller tramways connected up smaller pit-heads with the main way. Huge pumping-houses reared their ugly heights at every shaft-head, belching out dirty red steaming water at a thousand gallons to one stroke. Noisy locomotives grunted and fumed their way to and fro from end to end of the once solitary and silent moors. Miners and their families flocked in from all the over-crowded mining areas of England—from Durham and Newcastle, bringing their Northern accent and socialistic coal-talk, from Cornwall

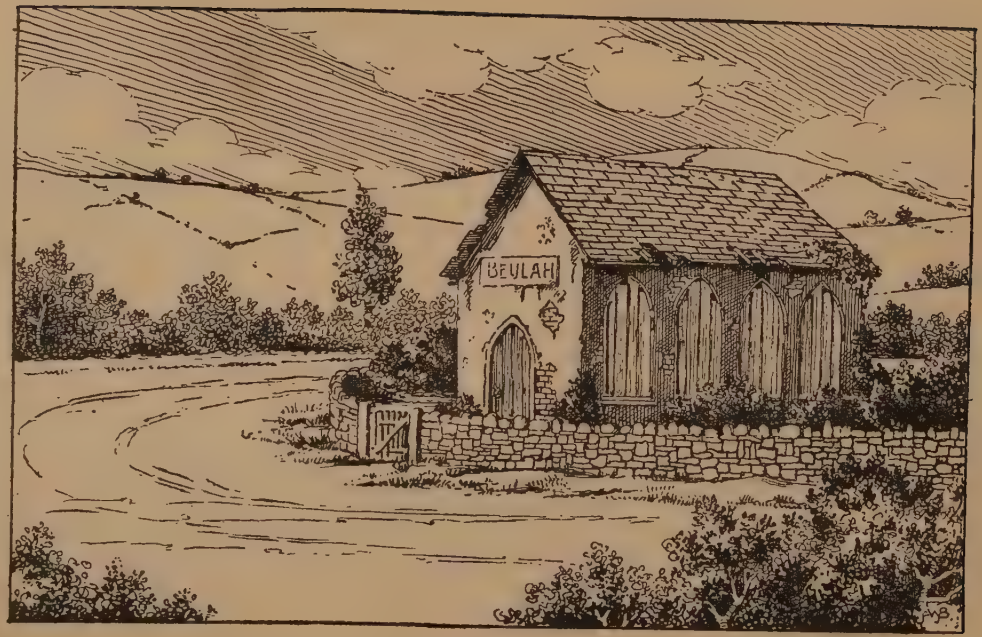
with their Cornish intonation, pure British words and Methodistic tin-talk, and from Wales, bringing with them a veritable unknown tongue when they chose to use it, standing or sitting together in clannish groups, discussing no one but themselves knew what. Villages and groups of houses or huts were hastily thrown together, some of wood, some of stone, and some of turf, and at Brendon Hill the Captain's House was built, the only one, I believe, which survives to this day. Two large schools were erected, and the buildings used for Church of England services on Sundays, while the Nonconformists ran up their Chapels, in which the Cornishmen and the Welsh vied with each other as local preachers and leaders of religious meetings. Foot-paths were made in every direction, covered with cinders and clinkers, particularly one long one connecting the two larger villages, and it was difficult to walk across field or moor or common without meeting passengers from place to place.

There was one device made at Keynsham pit-heads which was certainly verging on the beautiful. A wire rope, invisible at a distance, was stretched across a valley some seven hundred feet deep, and along this cable was passed the buckets, hanging on grooved wheels, conveying the ore to the opposite side. To the spectator at a distance, the sight of the moving bucket of ore slowly floating in the air without any apparent connection was approaching to romance. At least it was then,—fifty years before an aeroplane was seen.

Among the constructions made in this transformation, the Incline was perhaps the most enterprising, and, to some eyes, it was even picturesque. It was nearly a mile long from top to bottom, absolutely straight through the surrounding woods, and it had a gradient of one in four.



BRENDON HILL INCLINE.



"BEULAH"

The weight of the descending truck pulled the other up with a governing arrangement at the top. On a clear day, the view from the top or bottom transformed the objects at the other end into a minature dumb-show, the horses and engines and trucks being the size of the small playthings of a child.

Like many daring mechanical constructions, the Incline was attended with some danger through the breaking of the wire cable. Ten tons of ore, and the weight of the truck, hung upon this rope at a gradient of one in four, but the calculation had been made so well that for years not even a slight warning accident took place. But on one summer morning in 1867 there happened what must have been the most dramatic spectacle in the history of the mines. The man told off to examine the cable each time it wound itself around the drum, was taken with a sudden illness, and another put in his place who was not so competent. He looked on but did not *see* the fracture which was forming in the stranded rope. The cabled truck curved as usual over the brow of the descent and down a few yards in safety. Two miners had arranged to go down by the wagon, and they had placed in it a box containing a little spaniel puppy curled up and asleep and securely bedded in the ore. They were late in arriving, and were running up to take their place and the controller stopped the drum in the beginning of its motion to allow them to mount to their seats. But they never reached the truck. The slight twick from the drum supplied all that was needed to finish the fracture. The rope snapped, and the truck of ore, with its little sleeping guard, was free. In a second of time, it was whirling down the metals out of sound, and soon to be out of sight. The men at the top stood speechless, holding their breath as each foresaw the

catastrophe of the falling waggon, growing smaller and smaller as it shot down the hill, gaining in impetus till the maximum was reached, keeping true to the straight railroad but sending out sparks where there was the slightest curve. The men at the bottom had notice of what had happened by the motionless up truck, and cleared the way and opened the gate on the crossing, but carelessly left a fine old draught horse untied, and following his custom the faithful creature went to cross the rails. His head came into contact with the flying vehicle and he was instantly struck dead. On—on, the furious monster sped, sending out thicker sparks as the rails were more curved, glancing along at a hundred miles an hour, only diminishing in speed gradually, for the road inclines gently the whole way to the sea. Below Roadwater there is a level crossing with gates, through which the wagon cut clean like a bullet, scattering the fragments afar and leaving the posts untouched. Some sheep were feeding in the field close by and one was struck by the flying spar and killed. On it sped through Cleeve Abbey and Washford, and then right down to the jetty at Watchet, over which it crashed in an instant and plunged into the water, where its energy was at length expended and it sank in its own foam.

Up on the surface of the water a minute later was seen floating a box, and a boatman rowed out and took it in. He heard inside the sneezing and whining of a little puppy, and quickly opening the lid he found the pretty little dog, wet and shivering, sorrowful and wonder-struck, but otherwise unhurt, and carefully wiping and comforting it, he brought it to his home.

III.

Among the Chapels and Meeting-houses that were provided there was one on the way to Raleigh's Cross which was more pretentious and larger than the rest, and its ruins can still be seen. It was called "Beulah" which means, I believe, "married" or "delighted in," in the Hebrew, from whence the name is taken. I passed by its blistering walls and its boarded-up windows lately, and contemplated its name engraved large on an inset stone. If ever, I thought, she was beautiful and "delighted in" in the days of her marriage to the people, her widowhood is lonely and forsaken enough now, but still honourable. In this Chapel, I suppose, was heard, in the middle of last century, the preaching and prayers and confessions of the Methodist revival. Drunken miners, poachers, and breakers of the peace, were mastered and tamed by the preaching of Billy Bray. Many "pledges" were taken by the Blue Ribbon Society, and rough characters were reformed, and here was the scene of the conversion of the first notorious and then famous local character of Sam Cokes. This Sam was an inhabitant of Luxborough, and was without doubt one of the roughest, most foul-mouthed, law-breaking, and drunken rascals that could be found in any county. But he was by fits and turns also of a religious disposition, according to the tenets of the Methodists of those days. At intervals he would appear to be "converted" and for a time turn from his drink and debauchery to prayers and serious living, following for a week or so his trade of a carpenter with assiduity and his religion with great zeal. Then he would break out again into his old ways and scoff and blaspheme at every effort to keep him in. So this went on until he was about fifty years of age. But there

were those about him who, admitting the scandal of his reckless periods, preferred Sam Cokes the drunken to Sam Cokes the sober, on account of his too eager avariciousness which showed itself in his periods of sobriety. They said he was in too much of a hurry to make up for lost time.

Now, on one autumn Saturday night, he had been at Raleigh's Cross Inn for days drinking and loafing about. As it was getting dark, with his welcome worn out, he started for home and rambled along towards "Beulah," when he saw before him through a gateway a gigantic human figure robed in white flowing garments, flitting from place to place in the marshy moor. Old excavations had been made and forsaken in this common, and the more dangerous holes and pits had been left open and fenced around, and they were more or less full of water. It was not therefore a proper place for a stale-drunk man to be floundering about, but Sam was seized with a pious and penitential mood and this supernatural person had been sent, he believed, to awaken him to a new life. He got through the gateway, and in that moor he remained all night following the figure from place to place, pouring out devotions which, beginning with scoffing and blasphemy, became more and more real and fervently religious as his drunkenness was worked off in walking and stumbling and kneeling and praying aloud, so that when morning came he had become quite sober. Ecstatical with religious fervour and singing hymns with all his might, he made for the Chapel, intending to join in the worship of the day. Here he remained throughout that Sunday, refusing to take either rest or food, joining in and interrupting the services with pious ejaculations, and occupying the empty Chapel singing and praying alone when the congregation was away. A number of 'roughs' and youngsters gathered

round the Chapel doors, and this opportunity varied his exercises for he then preached to them till they went away! After the evening service he took the 'pledge' again, someone prevailed upon him to take some tea, and he set off towards home in the dark, declaring that he still saw the vision ahead of him and it was leading him home. A kind old miner, however, with a mixture of wisdom, saw some danger in such mental excitement, and went the whole way with him to Luxborough.

The odd thing is that there was no 'back-sliding' from this time forward, and Sam became one of the most fervent and untiring of local preachers and a model of respectability. But the same feature which had showed itself before in his periods of thrift and circumspection now became more marked than ever, and even in his melancholy but necessary office of Undertaker, which he adopted in his later life, it was difficult, people said, to decide in which character he displayed the greatest zeal and keenness, that of the unctuous ejaculator at the grave-side of the dead, or that of the assiduous collector of his extortionate fees.

IV.

A few of the farm hands about the hills found their way into the ranks of the miners, but not many, and it was generally the worthless and those of a low type of character. But there was one at least whose story was rather out of the common. Old Will Yeard and his wife, Mary, had lived at the Round House Cottage for forty odd years in the most peaceful bliss that can be imagined in married life. Not a cross word or cross-grained deed, or even a cross-purpose thought, had ever transpired between them,

and they had never been separated a whole day for that length of time. They had then at home their youngest son, about eighteen years of age, engaged upon a farm close by—the last of a family of seven. He became acquainted with some young miners who had an evil influence upon him, and by somewhat rapid stages he became a trial to his old parents, and finally left his farm work for that of the pits.

Curiously enough this unsteadiness of the son, instead of drawing the old people together in sympathy, became the cause of their frequent disagreement. Old Will wanted to take a severe course and frighten the son into better ways, while old Mary first pleaded for leniency, then shielded him against his father, and finally adopted a stubborn course of daily deception and intrigue in her obstinate softness. Thus the waywardness of the son resulted in marked moral degeneracy of both his aged parents. They quarrelled badly from day to day, and the evenings, with the lad away drinking and gambling, and their own feelings and words ever running high in hatred to each other, were turned into periods of unutterable misery and woe. Their lives became mutually unbearable, for in proportion as their love had been complete, so now their hatred and aversion for each other seemed a finely finished thing also.

One evening the quarrel turned upon the point of paying off Ben's debts round about with their mutual savings to put him into farming, for earlier he had shown marked ability and interested tastes in agriculture. As usual, old Mary had raised the point, and old Will flew into a rage at once. Taunt was matched against gibe again, like pastime in Hell, he calling up the wickedness of her past generations and she the reminiscences of his own early

youth, till at last he said: "Out o' 't yu baggage of an unknown sire—out o' this yer 'ouze!—an' gude urrdance o' 'e bo-ath! An' never shall other o' 'e darken these yer doors no more!"

With that the old mother rose, went upstairs and packed a little bundle and went out. She knew her husband and knew that he meant it, but she knew her purpose also, and it was to seek and save her son. She walked straight for the Raleigh's Cross Arms where she knew he often was. It was dark and past midnight, for they had quarrelled on till late, neither wishing to go to rest. On she stumbled and hobbled, and sky overcast and not a ray of light to be seen. When she had got about half way, a blinding flash of lightning lit up the whole country, instantly followed by a deafening clap of thunder, and she sank to the ground. Recovering herself, she hastened on, feeling that death itself would be a relief if such misery attended life—but then her boy—he too was unhappy, for he was not living his real life but was the victim of a snare. At length she arrived at the inn, amid torrents of rain, to find him sleeping in a cart shed, overcome with intoxication and useless toil. She collected some straw, placed part of it under his head and body, and on the rest lay down beside him, to wait till morning found them there.

Meanwhile, old Will, relieved of immediate irritation, had gone to bed, and in composing himself to sleep turned over to the side of the wide bedstead on which his wife usually slept. Tell me, oh ye Mud-Philosophers, by what earthly monition he did this? But it was well, no doubt, that he did, for just as he was going to sleep a flaming thunderbolt plunged through the roof, smote the bed-shaft in two where he usually slept, shot through the floor down into the kitchen beneath, and drove itself some eighteen

inches into the stone floor below. In a moment everything was in flames about him. Outside the thunder was rolling. He just had time to seize some clothes and scramble down the stairs and out of the cottage to see the building burning within and on the thatch and from wall to wall.

The rest of the story is the pleasantest part to tell, and is soon told. After a restless night in a neighbour's cottage old Will made his way to Raleigh's Cross at early dawn, before the news of the catastrophe had arrived. He found his wife in the inn in a bedroom watching over their son, sick with dissipation and a bad chill. In tears of deep penitence all three became reconciled, and the joy of reunion was perfected by Ben announcing that he was giving up mining as well as mining company and taking to farm work again. The Iron Lord, whose cottage the Round House was, hearing the story, placed them in a small holding on the Estate, and to-day Ben is one of the most honoured and thriving farmers in the Taunton Deane.

Some little time after that memorable night, when they had settled into their happy abode and things seemed steadily heading towards success, they were sitting by the fire one evening in blissful but silent reverie, when the old man broke the silence with a smile as if continuing a long conversation : " I told 'e, did'n I, that nother o' 'e should never darken they there doors no more ? I be a gudish prophet I reckon ! "

But generally speaking the whole social life of the mining villages was foreign and alien to the neighbourhood around. The miners mixed little with the agricultural people, for the latter were shy of them. Their dances and music, their songs, and their talk and " chaff," were in a

vein unknown to Brendon Hill, and before they had time to amalgamate their sojourn was over and they were gone. One of the Welshmen, however, introduced a song the words of which may still be heard about the hills, and the quality of the humour may be judged by the following quotation from it:

CRŌSHER BAILY.

Chorus. Wass you ef-fer see—
Wass you effer see—
Was you effer see—
Such a funny thing before!

1. Crōsher Baily he wass born
On a fer-ry windy morn
But the people all objected
'Twass before he wass expected!
Wass you, etc.

2. Crōsher had a sister Bella
And she had a great umbrella
And she thought so much about it
That she nef-fer went without it!
Wass you, etc.

3. Crōsher he wass a clat-cutter
And so earned his pread and putter
Put he liked not cutting clats
And said "I'll go gulling flats."
Wass you, etc.

4. Crōsher then he went to Cōllege
For to get a little knōwledge
But therein he did not well
For he nef-fer could for spell!
Wass you, etc.

5. Crōsher then he wass a Preacher
And he thought that ef-fry creature
Wass for listen to his foice
So he made up such a noice!
Wass you, etc.

6. Crōsher had a little broth-ther
Who wass wiser than the oth-ther
And when Crōsher went flat-gulling
He said "I'll go on clat-cutting."
Wass you, etc.

7. So he took the Sister Bella
And with her the great umbrella
And sustained them cutting clats
While old Crōsher gulled the flats.
Wass you, etc.

8. But the people soon grew weary
Of the flat-gulling Baily
They were weary of his foice
For he made up such a noice!
Wass you, etc.

9. So he came back to his broth-ther
For he could not do much oth-ther
To his sister Arabella
And to the great old umbrella.
Wass you, etc.

10. But he liked not the clat cutting
So he took to doing nothing
Nurtured by his sister Bella
Sheltered by the great umbrella.
Wass you, etc.

11. Crōsher then at length wass die
And the people all wass cry
For it cost full many a pound
To lay his pody under ground.
Wass you, etc.

12. Crōsher Baily he wass bury
And the people all wass merry
Feigning to sing "Fital Spark"
They wass shouting "What a lark!"
Wass you, etc.

13. Crōsher then was not regretted
Which I guess you haf suspected
But if not you now will laugh
When you read his Epitaph.
Wass you, etc.

Epitaph.

14. Here lies Crōsher the Clat-cutter
Who would have he was Flat-guller.
He gulled but one of all the flats
Himself—the thickest of all clats.
Wass you, etc.

V.

Meanwhile the Iron Lord had pursued his purposes on the Brendon Hills with masterly skill and benevolence. He bought out the existing leases and then the freehold of the mines, and finally, in 1875, purchased from the old Lethbridge family, the Luxborough and Withiel Florey Estates, with the pretty house of Chargot Lodge, including the choicest sporting and fishing preserves of this country. Around the neighbourhood he established and maintained the highest traditions of our English merchant landlords, lavish of expense in construction and improvement, liberal to his tenantry in rents and repairs, benevolent to the poor and struggling, while he touched them personally with advice and rebuke when he thought it necessary, upholding Church (and Chapel to some extent) with funds and patient tolerance of prejudices and fads; and there is no doubt that the high price of iron at that time justified the mining enterprise and for some years resulted in commercial gain to the capitalist, as well as the transformation and enrichment of the countryside.

And all this time he did not forget the little flaxen-haired blue-eyed boy of Road Lane and his old mare "Blossom." The Iron Lord steered his career along so that before he was eighteen he had earned enough to pay off the mortgage upon his mother's holding, and he himself was taken across to Wales where by rapid stages he was promoted to the highest post as an employee and finally was taken into partnership by his firm. But he retained his name of "Blue Eyes" to the end of his days, and when this story closes he was only waiting until Baron's Down came into the market in order to purchase his ancestral home at almost any cost. Old "Blossom" was lodged at

Chargot where in retirement and good care she could be seen sometimes still hauling a cart, but in the smartest black harness bedecked with glittering brasses ; oftener she was grazing in a paddock. "Blue Eyes" paid her periodical visits when there as Secretary to the Iron Lord, talked to her and patted her as of old. When she died he asked that she should be buried on the Brendon Hills near the place where he first met his great chief. He went and stood by the open grave, and he mingled with his genuine sorrow for the good old creature deeper and more personal thoughts of other times and other things. Still he knew there was more to come.

There is no doubt that the Iron Lord approached very near the ideal as a father of his people, for his active brain and generous heart led him to care not only for the smart business-like working of the Mines and the Estate, but also for the social condition of those over whom he became for a time a veritable King and Chief. His visits to the Mines were looked upon as a treat rather than an ordeal by all concerned, from the Captain to the pony-boys and the children in the schools. His enormous figure in the smartest attire, roved about and in and out of the works, and sometimes down the shafts, greeting the smiles of everybody with dignified concern and enquiry, going even into their family concerns with the ease of a marvellous memory and a good kind heart. Old men and women would speak to him with tears in their eyes while he enquired after their own age or sufferings or the success or failure of a son or daughter. Children would stop from their games to hold his horse or stand by his carriage, and murmur his title of "Iron Lord" to each other as he passed. But it was the men themselves who most of all admired him. Many were the disputes he settled between

them, many the injustice he relieved by his personal intervention.

Once and only once was there a serious dissatisfaction among the men regarding wages. But this may have been because the price of the labour above and underground steadily rose from the opening till onwards in the eighties. Then came the first check, which proved indeed a warning of the great decline and final closure of the mines. The Iron Lord's principle was to allot and ear-mark a certain fixed and liberal proportion of the gross profits of the enterprise to the worker's wage, a secret which was not disclosed until this agitation came which ended in the first and only strike among the men; and it was this incident which at one stroke completed the halo of glory with which the workers crowned their Chief, raised the "Blue Eyes" from the post of Secretary to that of partnership in the firm, and finally worked out on the Brendon Hills the principles which must in all ages and in all organized work, govern the relationship of Labour and Capital, of Master and Man. The Iron Lord and his Secretary were abroad when the strike broke out. For some weeks the struggle went on, and the Unions, being at the time badly organized, there was a great deal of want and distress, and some lawlessness. The whole neighbourhood around was invaded by gangs of poachers, and the villages and inns crowded with drinkers and gamblers. The miners would sometimes rendezvous to a quiet rural village and hold open air speech-making and riotous meetings, trying to rouse the land workers on their behalf, and pronounce doctrines about property which terrified the countryside, backing them up by minor deeds of violence. The old country people of the Hills were beside themselves with fear, for some of the strikers carried arms, and there was

but a policeman here and there and no one seemed to have any influence with them. There was a provision train waiting at Watchet and no one would drive it up the line.

Suddenly it was announced in every direction that the Iron Lord was at Chargot Lodge, and a meeting of the men was called at Brendon Hill at the Railway Bridge. Long before the time of meeting the whole place was thronged with people—men, women, and children, lurchers and sporting dogs—angry restless faces, mixing their brogues and dialects, Welsh, Cornish, Yorkshire, and a sprinkling of broad Somerset, freely using oaths in their talk while their whole condition showed signs of hunger and misery and reckless distress.

Promptly at the time of meeting, the Iron Lord drew up in a carriage and pair, with "Blue Eyes" beside him. As the horses came on a way was made in total silence. Every face turned towards him, while he returned their looks with the same dignity as of old. He strode from the carriage on to the steps of a shop which was empty of provisions, and his great figure stood high above his audience.

"I have come," he began, "from my holiday to speak to you here because I love you, and I heard that you were hungry and in want. I landed at Watchet with Mr. —— (calling his secretary by his proper name) and there we found a little train of provisions waiting to be driven to the Brendon Hills. I enquired why the train had not gone, and was told that the drivers were on strike and it had been there for ten days. Mr. —— and I boarded the engine, got up steam, and brought the train to Combe Row, for we heard you were in want up here. Will someone, therefore, find the controller of the drum and wind the food up the Incline?"

There was a movement at once to find the man, while the Iron Lord continued:

"I must leave Mr. —— to explain to you why the firm cannot pay the wages you demand. We would if only it was coming out of the mines. After he has spoken, you will be asked to elect a Committee and then you can talk the matter out more in detail. But we have come to bring you and your families food, and those who cannot pay for their orders when it arrives will book them and pay as they can. But I must go now, for to-morrow I have a pressing engagement in Wales. Mr. —— will now speak to you."

This was all he said, for he was a man of few words, but the effect was immediate and lasting. "Blue Eyes" spoke to them for an hour, and frankly and lucidly shewed them the financial condition of the whole undertaking, and at the end of his speech they appointed a committee, but all this committee did was to advise every man to return to his work as soon as the Pits were open, and he left them to join the Iron Lord. So ended the first and only strike in the Mines of the Brendon Hills.

There was one other factor which seems to have had a collateral influence in closing the strike. Jack Crascombe was then a budding youth and had begun life in work along the mineral lines. During the strike he composed a song in heavy Exmoor vernacular, and after the meeting by the bridge, while the committee were talking with "Blue Eyes," he perched himself on a projecting stone and started singing the song, which stereotyped and fixed the temper of the workers and at the same time placed on record the bringing up of the Squire's memorable Provision Train. The song was passed on to the Men-of-Exmoor Club and has thus been preserved:

JACK CRASCOMBE'S STRIKE SONG.

(*Sung in the Men-of-Exmoor Club*, 1880).

What's this yer talk in Communistic phrazes
Vor bind vree people wi' zome toadin' crazes
'Bout choppin' up the wealth o' zome o' us
Vor make volks maasters all, an' workers none o' us ?

But WORK IS WEALTH, an' not the gold or pāāper,
That's only vidding to be called the Buffer
Between the worker an' the Gūdes of Life
Turn on the Engine an' git urds o' strife !

Gi' me my work ! Gi' tū the right to do it !
Vor I'll be vree or yū will leave to rue it.
They've got vor larn what I call proper vreedom
Who stop the Engine an' zo starve a kin'dom.

Turn on the steam an' couple up the Buffer !
Gi' me my work ! 'Tis better'n doles o' pāāper.
Nor I nor capical can budge the gūdes alone
Our volks do want supplies. Let's git 'long 'ome !

VI.

We are now approaching the time when the Iron Lord's presence, as he grew old, was gradually withdrawn from the Brendon Hills, and good fortune and prosperity, whether or not totally or largely dependent upon that presence, gradually departed at the same time. It would appear that around the years 1880–90 the price of iron fell rapidly on account of the low cost of the Spanish iron of a better quality imported into the smelting fields of England and Wales, and the cost of working the mines became greater than the output of wealth. But a great many of the more thoughtful and more accurate observers foresaw the failure of the mines in the ageing and decline of its great chief, and the ever longer and longer intervals between his visits.

My Father was talking one day with an elderly and much trusted "gaffer" (that is head of a gang or gang-father). The shrewd old Yorkshireman shook his head while he said "T'ma-ines 'll gang on while t'owd Iron Lord gangs on—when t'owd Iron Lord lāākes t'ma-ines 'll lāāke tu." And so, by coincidence or connection it thus turned out.

From year to year and then from month to month the evidences of decline were seen by all around. Men were withdrawn in gangs and found work elsewhere, population decreased, cottages lay empty and began to dilapidate, foot-paths were less used and grew over with grass, churches and chapels became more and more empty, schools attended by smaller and smaller bands of happy children. There was an increasing and melancholy quietness coming over the Hills, and the quietness was not the same as that of old, just as a land forsaken by an army is not the same as that which has not been invaded. As the closure progressed, the whole scene became desolate in the extreme, before Nature had time to make up the breaches. And her work is slow. Even to this day there remains, especially to those who know, a regret for the vanishing activity, with its enterprising and human interests, covered over and intensified by that greater regret that it should ever have been set in motion. It was, I believe, this sentimental and humanitarian side of the story, and not the mere failure of a business, which darkened the later years of the Iron Lord. For he was *par excellence* a lover of Nature and a lover of humanity, above and beyond his great talents as a business man. And his heart remained always with the simplicities of life. It was in this mood that he paid his last visit to the Mines, when the great pumping engines had gone and the shafts were filling up with water, and the few men left were employed in carrying

away the moveable goods and material in the locomotives over the metals which were soon to be torn up and go the same way. They thus shortened their journey with each load, till Watchet was reached and the engines themselves took the water for the opposite shore.

The Squire was staying at Chargot with "Blue Eyes," now grown to a middle-aged man and united to the firm by his capital, by his commanding abilities, and by happy marriage alliance. After breakfast one morning, the Iron Lord asked "Blue Eyes" to take some lunch in his pocket and accompany him on a long drive over the Hills, alone. They set out together, the younger man taking the reins and the older directing the way. They visited every place of the aforetime activities, interchanging their opinions and refreshing their memories of the past. They spoke to all the remaining inhabitants and workers, stopping the pony on the wayside to receive the greetings of the passers-by and hear their story of the changing times and their regret for the departing "life" of the Hills. Jack Crascombe declared that he "niver didn' like this yer minin' work" and that he was moving away to more Western Exmoor, absorbed in agriculture, and the doings of the Men-of-Exmoor Club. Old Will and Mary Yeard had become very old indeed and confined to the precincts of their little holding. Old Mary told the Squire with quite pardonable inaccuracy that she and her spouse had never had a word of disagreement in their lives; while Sam Cokes went over again the story of his "conversion," and (after presenting a rather tall bill for some trifling work he had done) started preaching to them that "even Iron Lords, Squires and gentlemen must be 'converted and born again,'" (like himself and St. Paul), and he continued his discourse so long that they had to drive away

before he had quite done. Then on their way home they could be seen to make a halt before a mound of earth rising up above the sward in a little plantation near the lane in which they first met, covered over with a large stone, and upon the stone was graven the one word "Blossom." They both alighted from the carriage and stood for some time in silence. Each man had his thoughts, and each rapidly glanced back over the forty years of their acquaintance and work and friendship, but the difference in their age was the only cause of the slight variation of tinge in the picture they saw. It began with old "Blossom" toiling up Treborough Lane, and ended with their drive to-day. After a long silence, it was the Iron Lord who spoke first.

"The failure of the Mines," he said, "is but a small price to pay for what I have found. There is other metal in life's work besides iron-ore. There was old 'Blossom,' for instance! She was worth finding."

"She was indeed," said "Blue Eyes," "and I found her at Bampton Fair."

"An important lode-stone to attract such metal," said the Squire.

"But what about *my* lode-stone? You found me here."

"By Jove! so I did," said the Squire. "We shall end by both complimenting ourselves, for you were worth finding too."

II.

THE ORACLE OF THE MOORS.

"Far in a wild unknown to public view,
From youth to age a reverend hermit grew.

. . . . . .

Remote from man, with God he passed his days
Prayer all his business, all his pleasure, praise."
—*Parnell*, "The Hermit," 1.

IT was reported at the Club the other day that our Reverend Cleric had received an offer of promotion. It was said that an important and lucrative town living had been suggested to him combined with the office of Archdeacon and a prospective hint was added that he is singled out for a future Bishopric. I cannot describe the feelings with which this report was received in a better way than to give you the message that was sent him from the Club. It ran thus:

"DEAR REVEREND,

We have heard the news of the offer of promotion that has been made to you, and like children who think first of their own feelings and immediate interests, we unanimously ask you *not to go*. But we have deliberately found more far-reaching reasons besides. We are aware of the great compliment that is implied by your Church thus recognizing your value, but we claim that we were before that noble institution in this respect, for we discovered your merit these many years gone by and we blame your Church for its tardiness while we applaud its belated show of acumen.

Beyond this also we see the compliment paid to our historic and illustrious Men of Exmoor Club, and we bow low in recognition of it.

But we ask you, nay, *we bid you, not to go,* for there is a more glorious office and work for you to do here, where you occupy the post and discharge the sacred and inspired functions of the "Oracle of the Moors." This title we have solemnly conferred upon you and time will prove that the title is no empty one.

We now ask you to consider this decision of ours and to attend a meeting of the Club soon to be arranged and give us your reply, together with the reasons you will find for either accepting or rejecting this our authoritative advice.

Yours faithfully,
Men-of-Exmoor."

After reading this epistle, the reader will naturally wish to follow the incident to its close, and I will therefore now report to you as accurately as I can the speech which the Reverend made at the Club on the memorable meeting alluded to in this letter. He stood as he delivered his speech, by the side of Lord Heathpoult, in the chair, and I remarked that he looked smaller in stature than I had seen him look before, his whole aspect bespeaking intense humility.

He began in a quiet but clear voice which is exceedingly musical, but with which he seems to take no pains whatever for effect. As he went on, however, when he came to those passages in which there is passion and feeling, his voice grew louder, and once or twice in the prophetic utterances it seemed to be gifted with a mysterious force which stirred the depths of the soul, and then at the same time his figure expanded and his stature seemed to enlarge.

In the humorous passages his bewitching smile seemed to light up the room, and the whole way through it was a drama to see the signs of absolute union between him and his audience as the magnetic fire seemed to rock and alternate between them.

The Reverend's Speech.

"Men-of-Exmoor:

You have asked me to state my reasons for accepting your advice to remain on Exmoor in spite of the somewhat flattering offer of promotion I have just received—and I may add—rejected."

There was a distinct murmur of relief among the members at this announcement, followed by prolonged applause, each one rising in his seat from sheer excitement.

"I have to thank you deeply, too, for the title you have given me, which, though it does not confer inspiration upon me, yet when I speak under divine motion will help to give my utterances the consideration which is due to them both among ourselves and in the larger world—in short it is as I take it, the official registration of an already established fact.

And now you ask me to give my reasons for remaining upon the moors where it is true I merely have spiritual charge over a large number of acres, and am the Ecclesiastical Shepherd of an area which contains very few spiritual but a very large number of veritable 'sheep!' And so now I want to tell you why I decide to remain here.

In the first place, your letter to me naturally influenced me very much. You have such a direct way of doing and saying things, which comforts and strengthens men of my temperament. It is so eternally youthful and smacks of

Academic life. When I was at College things approved of were quietly passed by, but if a man had the bad taste to introduce anything particularly ugly or obnoxious to the rest, it was quite promptly seized and, burdened with a heavy stone, deposited in the river! So the Men of Exmoor at important junctures call black black, white white, and a spade is with them a spade as it was with Aristophanes of old:

> Let figs be figs, e'en though it be a few o' 'm.
> The bowl's a bowl in which we make a stew o' 'm.*

Your directness therefore has saved me, for your trumpet gave no uncertain sound, and I shall seek to keep alive your love and confidence while practising the same frankness in my utterances and deeds.

But before your message arrived my inclination was to remain where I am, for all the allurements of modern fame and fashion have no attraction for me. I have no desire to be near the hub of religious organization, for the further you keep away from that hub the better the work that is done. It is the pulley of large radius that drives fastest. I shall never forget being infuriated with a lay friend of mine in my youth who said: 'If you want to retain your religious faith, have very little to do with Parsons!' But I was very young then, and have lived long enough to know what he meant by his somewhat harsh dictum. Organized religion if ingenuous is apt to be comical, if diplomatic it spoils of deep craftiness, and I have no desire to help in the picture of either the one or the other. Thus is shown the difficulty of the beautiful injunction to be 'as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves.'

* The original is *τὰ σῦκα σῦκα, τὴν σκάφην δε σκάφην ὀνομάζων.*

"Then again you were nervous lest the attraction of a better income might tempt a man of my well-known poverty, and I thank you for your really kind consideration. For I am poor, no doubt, if you reckon poverty by the size of income. But the affluent man is he who has a margin between his outgoings and his income. One of our members the other day met a boy who had just received a half-a-crown for doing something in which his little brother had taken a part. 'Now,' said the superior, 'divide your half-a-crown with your little brother!' 'I will when I'm rich,' said the abnormally thrifty child. 'Should you amass ever so great a fortune you will never be richer than you are now' was the reply.

"I remember hearing a song when I was a little boy, some of the words of which I have forgotten, but I will quote what I can:

SONG.

I'll tell 'e wāt 'tis, if thee wants vor tū live,
Then fish while thee canst by all stre-ams,
Thee must work and contrive vor tū take and tū give
And bring down thee wănts to thee me-ans!

When starting thee life to be safe in the strife
Be honest, vor honesty cle-ans
Then get all thee can's'—there's no other plans
And bring down thee wants to thee me-ans!

If thee has'n' the luck to git 'at thee's' like
There's always a choice 'tween two be-ans,
Then like 'at thee's got! 'tis best of the lot
And bring down thee wants to thee me-ans!

"So for me, Men of Exmoor, I have not much margin, but I have no calls upon me which I cannot meet. Lord Heathpoult is in the habit of saying that he can get a better Parson for £200 than for £500 a year; and my ambition is to be good!

" Then again, there is so much in the town minister's work that turns him into an amusement-provider if he is of one school, or a machine for saying prayers if he is of another, and some go so far as to expect him to be both! The faculty and fire of the Prophet is gone, and people lament over it, but they do not provide the conditions under which the true Prophet must live—the silent, isolated communion with the ' Soul of the Universe ' which is Nature's God.

" But as for my present work itself, dear Men-of-Exmoor, I regard it as of the highest importance. It is a well-known thing that the country supplies the ever decaying population of the towns, and recuperates the physical and mental constitution of our race. It is said that in three generations the town dweller dies out if not supported with fresh mixture of country blood, whereas the vigour and healthiness of country life multiplies its population beyond the provision of livelihood, and according to the methods of modern procedure they have to migrate to the town in order to earn their daily bread. Generation succeeds generation in the vigorous climate of our Hills, so that it is not an uncommon thing to find people about Exmoor who can trace their family tree in direct line back into the centuries of the past. Tradition and sometimes records abound among the humble yeomen classes which connect them with the remote historic ages, and their pedigrees would compare well (as far as length is concerned) with some of the richest and most be-titled people of our land.

" For this reason, therefore, work among them is of the greatest significance, so that they in their turn may counteract the growth of evil and encourage the progress of good in the thick centres of our modern life until the people are scattered abroad once more. For it is one of the

greatest subjects for lamentation that the self-destructive tendency of congregating together in great centres of population has marked this and all the decadent periods of the history of man. One of the most ancient accounts of such a swarming of the people is that of the Tower of Babel in the Book of Genesis, where the historian is at pains to make it known that such congestion of human beings was not only detrimental to the race's welfare but obnoxious to the will of God. 'So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth and they left off to build the city.' This is the most ancient protest—the most modern is the cry of Rider Haggard 'Back to the Land!'

"Beloved Men-of-Exmoor! I have to deliver you a message today like the prophets have delivered before me; and I will adopt their very form of address, for my soul burns with the passage of it. 'Thus saith the Lord,'—that modern congested civilization is a failure and if persisted in will eventually bring about the destruction of the race. But the days of its unwholesome tyranny are numbered, for I see signs that the Lord will make bare His mighty arm to scatter the people abroad again, to work more healthily with their bodies, to think more deeply with their minds, to breathe more freely with their lungs and soul, to 'look out upon the Infinite' in faith and prayer and adoration. One of the inducements to forsake the town and dwell in the country will be the universal use of the faculty of Wireless communications, for shortly no one will be beyond call, and while he will hear all that he wants to hear, and see all that he wants to see, at the turning of a switch, he will at the same time enjoy the silence and serenity of dignified isolation among the beauteous wilds of majestic Nature.

" And the time is coming, beloved Men-of-Exmoor, when religious officers, too, will be few again as they were in the days of old, but in proportion as their numbers decrease, Religion will be held in higher esteem. A multitude of bees to make honey—a large number of hands to make a factory hum, but the interpretation of the Voice of God *belongs to the few.* Literature and Wireless telephony will propagate their prophecies to the limits of the earth, and there will be no contaminating medium or freezing organization through which the message will have to pass. I have often speculated what would have been the history of the Christian Church had these means of propaganda existed in the days of Our Master in Galilee. His very words and language—for we hardly know now what tongue He spake—His penmanship—for we are even doubtful if He could write—nay the very sound of His voice and articulation would have been heard and seen in all the civilized world and would have been stored up and preserved for us to see and listen to in the present day. How stupid and useless would have seemed to us all the religious controversies of the two thousand years gone by! How unnecessary the criticism and exegesis of the New Testament whether 'higher' or 'lower!' How impossible some of the daring deeds of the Church! How mundane the organizations of the Kingdom which He emphatically declared was 'not of this world' at all!

" But I must not pursue this digression further now, though it is so clearly connected with my remaining upon the Moors. The place of the Prophet and the Oracle is in the wilderness, and his office is to be 'sought unto,' and not to 'run after' his hearers. Few men perhaps will be ready to obey these austere conditions of life, and Ministers will become few and far between, and Religion will be

more thought of than talked about, and the prophets will once more ' speak as the Oracles of God.'

" For they will be absorbed in watching the movements and convulsions of rough, wild Nature, as well as her silent, noiseless progress. They will walk and sit lonely and detached in the wilds and the caves of the earth, and listen to the voices about them, undisturbed by the jarring noises of the present effete civilization. Exmoor is one of the regions in which the Voice of God is clearly and frequently heard. Each time there is a special movement of natural forces, or a long and stubborn ' lock-up ' in a hard frost or lengthy drought, I have there gazed long and intently out upon the Infinite and have invariably received a distinct message for myself or the world. And when I am puzzled and distraught by the problems brought or sent to me, and cannot give the answers direct and promptly to my pious clients, I move off higher up into those sacred heights which ever way I am led, sometimes towards Dunkery or Showlesborough Castle, sometimes in the gloaming seeking the shades of Tarr's Steps, or Badgeworthy Water, or Cow Castle. Here I remain if so prompted and mingle my soul with the Soul of free Nature until the answer comes full and clear in rippling cryptic verse or bold passion of prophecy—' Thus saith the Lord ! '

" It is not long since that I was consulted by two foreign ex-soldiers, a Belgian and a Frenchman, who showed me their wounds and spoke in lisping faulty accents of a comrade Exmoor man who had fallen in the Battle of the Marne and with his last breath had given them directions (if they should survive the war) to make their way to Exmoor and find some documents which he had buried in a ' burrow ' somewhere upon the Moors. The names and places were so confused in their foreign handling that

neither the dead man's family nor all the authorities they had consulted had helped them in their task, and they had now spent three years in faithful fruitless search of their friend's hiding place, accompanied by a trusty-looking dog which had belonged to the fallen man.

" While talking with them, I caught the large brown eyes of their dumb companion, for they were fixed upon me in enquiring pathetic anxiety, and breaking off the talk with the men, I gazed long into the animal's soul. ' That dog,' I thought, ' will probably find the place.'

" All the clue they could definitely give me was that the dead soldier's sacred messages were buried under the hedge-row somewhere upon the borders of the Moors. First I verified the credentials of these faithful men, and then asked them to return in a month's time if they did not hear from me. Our district was locked at the time in a dense anti-cyclone and the weather from day to day rigidly dry and hot. I took a tent and some food and went off and camped out at a place in the Forest where I had frequently received soul stirring and helpful inspirations, and there I remained for three days, in absolute silence and concentrated thought. On the third day at midnight there arose and swept around me a thunder storm such as I have never witnessed before or since. The lightning came down upon the surrounding hills and the thunder rolled and rumbled in the distance. Thunder and lightning have always had a mysterious effect upon me, and I immediately begin in its presence to pray or to quote some passage of profound adoration. Perhaps this is the result of being instructed in my childhood that thunder was the very voice of God, and no one was allowed to speak except quietly during a thunderstorm—so much reverence was there around me for the convulsions and

cataclysms of nature. Whatever science may have taught me since, still these things always remind me that we are in the grip of the Infinite.

" The passage I am most fond of at such times is that of Elijah on Horeb, and it leaped to my lips now as I gazed and trembled : ' And He said " Go forth and stand upon the Mount before the Lord." And behold the Lord passed by and a great and strong wind rent the mountains and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entering in of the cave.'

" There was around me at this spot a panorama of the undulating horizon upon which were descending the lightning and thunderbolts in a circle, ever drawing nearer and nearer from all directions ; and the flashes were so frequent and luminous that all the objects on the hillocks were clearly visible. Once a large meteorite as large as a football shot from the Heavens and dissipated itself in ten thousand sparks while it illuminated the land around so that every detail was clearly seen. And from my tent door I beheld this little quick tragedy. The faithful dog whose eyes I had gazed into was digging with all his might at something in the ground beneath the heather and gorse. Suddenly he fell dead under a fork of lightning and stretched himself out upon the sward and never moved again.

" In the morning after the storm was over I returned to my cottage and obtaining the help of our beloved Jack Crascombe we went to the spot and found the long sought for iron cash-box buried in the soil on which the dead dog

lay. Gently and reverently we covered over his body in the grave from whence we had lifted the Sacred Messages of the dead for the discovery of which he had laid down his simple life. Such things are among my common experiences upon the moors.

"There is one other feature which holds me to Exmoor of so deep and far-reaching a nature that it enters into my own composition and is gradually binding me about and tying me down so that I have no desire to move away for long or to strain those enthralling fibres the roots of which are partly embedded in the Moors and partly grow and thrive in my own soul; and it is the originality, the depth, and the humour of the composite Exmoor character.

"Now it is obvious that the Prophet and Philosopher will be ever engaged in the grave and serious things of life, and his soul will be torn by the sorrows and enigmas of his pious clientéle. But my philosophic discovery has been that many of the problems of life are solved in the sacred vein of humour, and the sorrows and bitterness of it are often best borne by quaffing them in a bumper of gentle and innocent merriment.

"Our beloved Doctor Healy is often saying to me: 'The Clergy, sir, only see men at their best; and lawyers see men at their worst; but the doctor sees men *as they are.*' Now I would add that the rural clergy can compete with doctors to some extent in this respect. The very roughness of country life prevents the disguises of the town; and the higher you rise in altitude on the hills the less possible it is to cover up in deceptive urbanity the characteristics and idiosyncrasies of the mind. That is why Exmoor abounds in outstanding personalities both in mind and body; and a clergyman, if he is worth his salt, will find in his daily contact with the workers of the

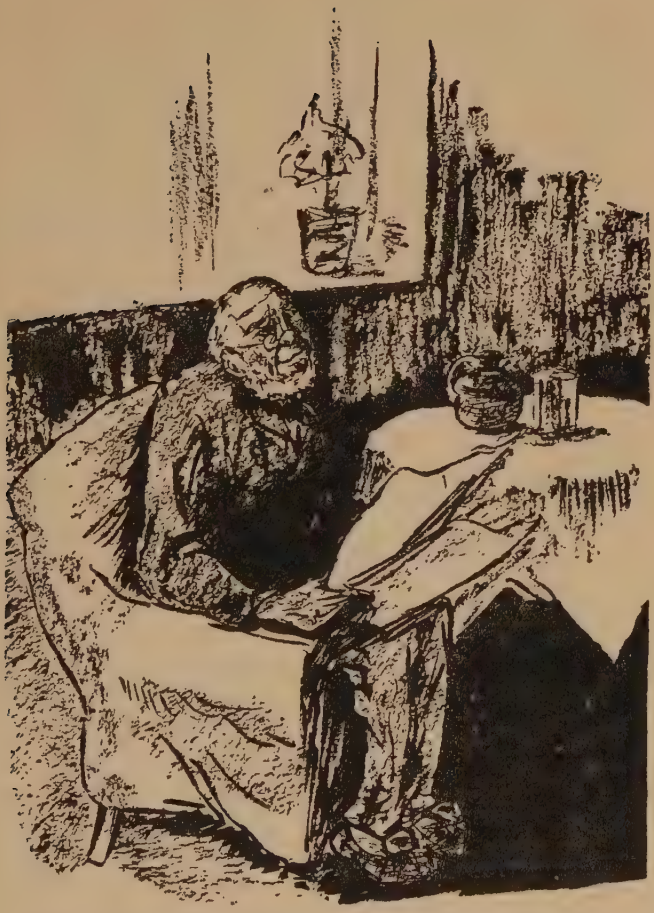
soil, the farmers and shepherds of the Moor, chances for admiration and veneration such as bring tears to the eyes, and subjects of humour and fun that will remain with him and bear repetition to the end of his days.

"Back in the war-time, when wages went high and affluence prevailed among the workers, a friend of mine asked me to take a wedding for him at his Church. I united a stalwart labourer and a blooming milk-maid dressed in the results of legally and artificially enforced prosperity. My own condition was a little pinched and my coat and gown and bicycle all showed signs of temporary poverty beside the luxurious turn-out of the war-time wedding party. After we had signed the register, and the Sexton had collected the Rector's fees, the bride-groom turned to the best man, and nodding in my direction, he said:

"'I say, Bill, 'e be a gude-lookin' Coorate, bāānt 'e? Pity tho' 'e can't avo-ard a better co-at! Gi' mun a shellin' Bill!'

"I accepted the shilling with so much affability that the others of the company followed his example and I went away with quite a nice little fee for my services, and one old lady shouting after me as I mounted my bicycle promised me that whenever I called at her cottage 'I'll gi' thee the rin of thee jās!' she said. But when I related this story to our beloved Alderman Upjoy, who is listening to me now, he promptly replied: 'Ah Reverend! I never take a man by his looks, nor a parson by his books!"

"Nor is it always thus easy for the Clergy around Exmoor. Not long since a brother cleric came for my advice, for he had had another living offered him and his complaint was that 'Exmoor people all *looked at him out of the corners of their eyes!*' My advice was that he had



"ĒES! BUT 'ER WUS A CONTR'Y OLE TO-ĀD!"

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better accept the proffered change at once! The advance to their hearts should sometimes be rather circuitous, too, in keeping with their own local proverb: 'The vardest w'y round 's the nearest w'y whome!' I remember when I first arrived here, there was such a general hearty welcome given me that in my uplifted zeal I approached a young man who regularly attended Church and asked him if he was 'confirmed.' His reply was: 'No, I bāānt confirmed, but I can 'old me own tho'!' and he did not appear in Church again for the space of some months.

"Moreover, I have carefully noticed that their judgment of each other is so keen and shrewd that any exaggeration of either virtues or vices in another is immediately met by them with a qualification, whether tacit or expressed, and there is a sincere and determined tendency to hold the balances in any account of character or circumstance that a speaker may particularly favour and try to embellish. I called one day upon an old man who had recently lost his wife—a partner with whom he had lived in decently good relationship for forty years. I began my conversation with a sympathetic allusion to those facts, and recalled her virtues only, with some discretion as well as kindly feeling. He listened in silence and apparent approval for some time, but as I went on and seemed to demand or at least to challenge a reply he gave a rather restive impatient twist to his body and muttered: 'Ees, but 'er wus a—a—a contr'y ole toād!'

"Beloved Men-of-Exmoor, such originalities as these cannot fail to link a man's soul to the people of these romantic and peculiar hills. They start up philosophic speculations which run like the native hares of the Moor in March, they open prophetic visions like the incomparable scenery of the Dooneland itself, they tickle the

most sensitive veins of the humourist's soul. I must not keep you much longer so kindly listening to my talk; but I cannot conclude without reverting to the circumstances under which I settled among you, to which your Spectator has alluded in one of his papers.

"I came among you after a good deal of experience in various parts of the world, distraught and downcast, and here on Exmoor, where I was born and where my ancestry for five hundred years have toiled and rested, I found, as he correctly reports, that steadying philosophy which shall guide me, I trust, through life and through death. And I will teach it also to those who have the ears to hear, and the mind to take it in. I would awaken the soul of the distracted, stunted, shallow, mechanical beings of modern congested civilization—awaken them to the beauties, the freedom, the health, and the humour of the lonely dwellers on the Hills. I will tell them too of that 'still small voice' which is seldom heard in the hubbub of 'meetings,' of 'brotherhoods,' 'committees,' or even 'congregations.' Beloved Men-of-Exmoor, rejoice with me I say, for I have indeed found that which was lost! Of the ten pieces of silver which everyone is given in birth, I had lost but one, it is true, but they were so piled together in mutually fitting angles and sockets that the loss of one brought disorder and chaotic confusion in the whole—that piece was the Philosophy-of-the-Moors. I have found it again, and the burnished and kaleidoscopic structure stands once more corrected, giving out the picture of majestic beauty as of old. Rejoice with me, I say, for I myself was lost in false philosophy as the Prodigal Son was lost in morals, and in sheer hunger I ate the husks of man-made mud-metaphysics in the strange far-off land of human conceits where 'votes' and 'majorities' and

'resolutions' and 'popular opinions' tie up the soul and body of man against the freedom of Heaven.

"It is not much wonder then that I refuse to leave you, for I love the Moors of my natural as now of my philosophic birth, and I love the Club which when Church and Governments failed in olden times stood alone against the Doones, and now again, almost alone, stands for and is willing to fall by, the free development of our Race."

III.

URCHARD TILER.

" God made him, therefore
Let him pass for a man."
—" Merchant of Venice," i, 2.

NOT many years since there lived on one of the Spurs of Exmoor running south, an interesting personage who revived the eccentricities of the Exmoor character of seventy or eighty years previous to his time. His cottage was situated on one of those lonely and wind-swept highways that lead from the Moors to the more inhabited purlieus. As you pass by a farm in this neighbourhood, the sheep-dogs, unaccustomed to a strange form and gait, will rush out with great noise and a pretence of savage ferocity such as might terrify a strange traveller. But there is not much in their dreadful threatenings as a rule, and they will soften down to whimpering and fawning at the use of a kind word and a coaxing whistle. Urchard Tyler kept one of these sheep-dogs, not because he had sheep or cattle of his own, but to prove and emphasize his own theory about himself, which was that though he now lived in a cottage and had little external signs of the dignity of his lineage, yet he was a " varmer's son, an' me gran'-vather an' gurt gran'vather waz varmers avore in their time, an' tenants under Ole Zur Tummus Acland—Tell 'e wăt now ! " As you walked or bicycled by his house, his old sheep-dog always came out and kept up a running

URCHARD TILER.

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or capering hullabaloo with an extraordinary amount of tongue to inform his master and the whole neighbourhood that a stranger was passing by. Urchard generally made an appearance, with the hope of engaging in conversation—for he was a great talker, and his more important utterances were always ushered in by "Yar! Tell 'e wăt now!"

At one time I had occasion to pass by his cottage very frequently, and thus became well acquainted with him. I naturally picked up the name by which he is generally spoken of, and one day called him "Dick" to his face. Instantly I saw that I had displeased him, by the darkening of his countenance, already dark enough with grime, and he at once put me right. "Yar! Tell 'e wăt now! Dōant 'e go kăllin' me Dick, vor I dō-ant like ut. Yū muss plaize tū kall me 'Urchard' or 'Rich-chard' or 'Mister Tiler'—but dō-ant 'e go gwăin kăllin me Dick like the bo-ays dū about yer!" I explained at once that it was a mistake, and that I should always call him Mr. Tiler, or if he liked it I would like to call him 'Rich-chard.' So that was settled.

It would appear that the 'bo-ays' of the neighbourhood was his great sorrow, for they were for ever trying to raise fun out of him, and it was fairly easily done when two or three of them got together. One trick was to hide behind a hedge as he was passing and pitch over some light harmless material such as a dry bit of stick or a ball of paper or a tiny pebble, very near him. I saw this tantalization going on one day under the skilful direction of two school-boys, one on each side of the road. It was a long time before he discovered the direction whence the missiles came, but at last he caught sight of a boy's foot in the hedge-row. As he was not however capable of catching them or administering physical correction, his only chance was to

lecture them in the vernacular: "Yar! Yar now! Tell 'e wăt now! Dō-ant 'e go gwăin doin' that there now! Yū'll vrighten me ole dōn-kay. Yū bess wy picky yer wy along now! Yū bess wy mitchy yer wy 'omewărd!"

Rich-chard (commonly called Dick in spite of his efforts to preserve his dignity) was by profession a Pedler, visiting markets, fairs, and sales, and all places where people collected for secular purposes, but the chief commodity he sold since the multiplication of shops, was "nits" which he harvested and dried himself in the fruitful seasons, and he was careful to explain to each buyer that he regularly put them all in water to test their quality and discarded those that were "deeve," *i.e.* without kernels. By sheer persistent perseverance and economy of production he was thus supposed to have collected quite a store of riches, which he carefully hid away in coin in the walls and floors and furniture of his cottage, so that as years went on and he grew more and more economical in his "outgoings" stories of his wealth grew up: that there was hardly a stick of furniture, a nitch or corner, in wall or floor or roof that did not contain bags of gold and silver: that the cottage was literally lined with coins: and that the weight of precious metal hidden away in it was more than the masonry and timbers of the building itself. How far this was true will be seen later. But, meanwhile, his constant asseverations of his poverty he believed would satisfy his adult neighbours and allay their suspicions of his real affluence, and his sufferings only came from the petty annoyances of mischievous youth. He once explained to me that he tried living for a while in South Molton, but that he could not remain there "'Cause of the blasted chillern!" His "ole dōn-kay" fed totally on the hedges of the roadside, except that when food was scarce and the

fences were fairly easy he climbed the hedges into the farmers' fields. Dick had a smug way of treating their protestations, and nobody ever was able to make him feel the wrong of any of his encroachments or trespassing. One yeoman was so annoyed by seeing the donkey so often in his fields that he accosted Dick with great warmth : " The next time I see your old donkey on my fields, I'll shoot him dead on the spot," he said.

" Aw, dō-ant 'e go dūin' that there, Māāster !—Dō-ant 'e shut me ole dōn-kay Zur ! I'd zooner vor 'e shut me a brāāce o' rabbats an' zen' me down ! " And the yeoman was so tickled by the crafty humour that he sent him the rabbits and told the story to the Men-of-Exmoor Club on the next market day.

Dick's days were occupied with travelling with his old donkey from place to place, and attending the sales and markets, but it was a puzzle to know how he spent his evenings, especially the long ones in winter. I asked him once how he passed his time when his donkey was loose on the roads and his poultry were roosting in the curious tumble-down sheds he had put up for them. His reply was simple enough : " I gen'ally zits and dthinks—an' zometimes I jiss zits ! " he said. But the neighbours were not satisfied with this explanation, for they started the theory that every evening Dick locked his door and turned out every hole and crevice where his money lay, carefully counting it coin by coin and put it back again with watchful solicitude, and as the stores grew larger the nightly process took longer to perform, until at length it was very late before he was wont to go to bed.

Urchard was by faith a Methodist, and I am informed that the origin of one of our well-known proverbs—" Cleanliness is next to Godliness "—is in one of John Wesley's

sermons. It would therefore not be unreasonable to suppose that Methodists of all denominations would cultivate this virtue to a fairly liberal extent. But Dick was not particularly clean, at any rate to look at.

"The Reverend" arrived in these parts just in time to make the acquaintance of Dick, and their first interview with each other resulted in some amusement. After some conversation on the roadside, Dick burst out with his usual "Yar! Tell 'e wăt now! I dū wish yū waz our passen up yer—Yu be a nice clāin-lookin' man, yū be!" Looking at Dick the Reverend was grateful for the compliment. But the motive of it lay a little apart. It would appear that Dick had wished to put up a tombstone on his father's grave in the churchyard of his parish, and when the Vicar told him there was a small fee to pay he argued about it thus: "Aw, yar now! yū didn' aught tū charge nothin', yū knaw. Me vather waz Churchwardin of this yer parish, an' he drawed all they there sto-ans for restorin' the old Church vor nort, yū knaw. Tell 'e wat now!" "Right!" replied the rather sharp Vicar, "If that be so, then it is enough to make the good old man turn in his grave for his son to be so mean as to object to pay the common dues of God's Acre." So Dick was worsted, but sour, and when the Reverend came upon Exmoor, he made his acquaintance and told him he was a "clain good-lookin' māne," and he wished he "wăz our Vicar up yer! 'Ees I dū!"

This penuriousness hurried the growth of fabulous stories of Urchard's secret wealth. It became the talk of Exmoor, and soon the rumours of it were heard in circles that were not so law-abiding as his neighbours. It so happened that two stalwart and ruffian-looking tramps started simultaneously one morning, the one from Lynton,

the other from South Molton, and they met somewhere by chance near Urchard's cottage. They compared notes of the neighbourhood, and both of them had heard of the supposed riches of this old miser. Another of their fraternity was taken into the partnership. They saw Dick that day, and he saw them, so the enterprise had to be postponed for a while. But the poor noisy sheep-dog died that night of poison. Some days after this therefore the three met again by arrangement outside the cottage just as it was getting dark. Lying under cover they heard Dick shut in his poultry and enter the house, closing the door behind him. Before he had time to settle down to his evening's money counting the latch was lifted, the door was swung open, and three powerful looking fellows stood before the trembling pedler. One seized him and stopped his mouth with his flat hand, another swung round his face a long, thick woollen scarf, winding it about his mouth so as to completely gag speech or sound, while the third began to explore the building. One of the men held a bar of iron in his hand, and while they were tying him to the settle, they gave him to understand that if he tried to move or make a noise, one blow would deprive him of life, while if he remained quiet and assisted them in their business he would escape without further injury. They then ransacked the cottage from roof to floor, finding most of the hidden coins and paper, and made off, leaving Dick strapped to the settle and gagged with the scarf. There he remained till about 10 o'clock the next day, when a farmer called to ask him about his poisoned dog. He quickly unstrapped him and let him free, lit his fire, and heard his story while helping him to get some food.

Exmoor is a difficult place to escape from on account of the vigilance of the inhabitants inherited from Danish

times and encouraged by the traditions of the Men-of-Exmoor Club. The robbers were all three arrested in a few days, one at Simonsbath, another at Brendon, and a third almost escaped by Charles and East Buckland to Swimbridge. Some silver and notes were found upon each of them. They were brought to South Molton for trial, and Dick was there to give the simple evidence. "Where did the bags of money lie at the time of the burglary?" asked the Magistrate.

"Up (sniff) in me baid-drawin' room (sniff)—up there!" whined out poor Dick, in sobs.

"At what time of day was it?"

"A-bowt (sniff) a quărter ărter dărk (sniff) I reckon (sniff) up in me baid-drawin' room, up there! (sniff)."

"And how much money do you think you had there altogether?"

"Dree 'underd an' dree 'alf-crowns (sniff), tū 'underd an' nine shillin's and twenty-vive vive-pound no-ats, an' the rest waz coppers. Tell 'e wăt now!" said Dick, recovering his spirits somewhat as he went on reckoning. So the sum total was not a large fortune, and even this could not be accounted for in the wake of the three criminals. But this may not have been Dick's fault.

Only one of the criminals was of local origin. Dick said he knew his brother, and that "they waz all a rough lot. His brother could ait whit-pot till he could touch it with 'is vinger, an' drink zider till it urn'd out bo-ath zides of 'is mouthe!"

After this experience, Dick removed from this lonely cottage to one further down from the Moors, where there were more neighbours. Here again the "blasted chillern" were his great affliction—more so than ever. I heard him holding an altercation with some boys one day threatening

RICH-HARD AT HOME.

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to "putt ivvery stick in the 'ood-'ouse to 'e." But his threats were not much regarded, as he never carried them into action. It is a melancholy thing that this old bachelor should have met his latter end as the result of the provocations of children. But such was indeed the case with poor Urchard, and this is the account of it:

Some mischievous schoolboys found his donkey feeding on the roadside one day, and drove him off to the neighbouring parish miles away, and let him go in a wood which extended for some miles up the banks of the Bray with little fence or interruption. On the old donkey wandered, with plenty of pasturage and no work to do, becoming more lively and in better condition from day to day, till at last with the approach of a footstep or any sound he would prick up his ears and trot off, or even gallop like the wild deer his companions, and proclaim his freedom from restraint like the other wild things about him. His periodical and resonant bray reverberating through the wood and up the valleys, first raised the story that there was a wild ass living in Bray-side woods, and then connected him with Urchard's lost donkey, and so it was that he was found. Meanwhile, Dick had been tramping the countryside in search of him, on the Exmoor principle, as he said, of

> "Dthicky lost, dthicky zeek!
> Dthicky vind, dthicky keep!"

Dick's habit was to pick up his meals as he went along, especially at times when he could point to any loss or calamity as a cause for pity and charity. He thus passed by Susan Weaver's holding, an old acquaintance of Dick's and a distant relative.

"Why dissen thee look better arter thee old dōnkay? Thee art allays in zome mess o't, I warrant!"

Thus he was greeted by Susan, who was in a very cross mood that day.

"I smells vish!" said Dick, craning his neck in at the door-way of her spotless kitchen, where he had enjoyed many a meal at other times.

"An' that's thy share!" shouted Susan, and slammed the door upon him. But within a few hours she relented and wept, for she always had a soft place for Dick, but he had never "come up to the scratch" somehow. Her secret thoughts were that she could make him more comfortable and clean, and that he would be better employed doing the work of her small holding than running about "zellin' nits." But it was not now to be.

On he went in his search, faring better with his next call. Nothing had been seen of the donkey, but he was welcome to a meal.

"How do you like your new place?" said the kindly blacksmith, Sam Bodley.

"Aw, perty middlin' like, dthank 'e, Zam!—but—but the tetties be small!"

"I hear you have a new Parson on Exmoor. He preached yer last Zunday, an' a fine looking fellow he is."

"Ees," said Dick, "I wish 'E wăz our Passon, I dū. 'E's a nice clain lookin' man, and I likes me little 'ouse, an' me chapel. But the tetties be small, I zim."

He then went on describing his new abode and especially his neighbours, not forgetting his life-long grievance—"the blasted chillern." The adult population was very kind to him, he said, especially since his misfortune. His chapel was close at hand, and it was a warmer climate than further up on the Moors. "But," he concluded, after ruminating awhile, "the tetties be turrable smäll!"

In parting from this kindly entertainment, he little

thought that it was the last human word he would exchange on earth. About a mile further on he heard the bray of his donkey in the wood. He located the spot and entered carefully and quietly. Up the plantation his path led to a corner in the wood with a deep quarry on the right dropping 150 feet sheer into the road beneath, a hedge on the left, and a gateway in the narrow corner in front. There stood the donkey, with his halter still hanging down as he had left him miles away a month ago. Speaking quietly to him, he hemmed him in, and, knowing his funny jerkiness of manner, cautiously crept up and seized the rope of the halter, tying it around his wrist to make sure of holding on. The old animal, disliking the idea of again being in harness, pulled Dick hither and thither, in obstinate restiveness. Dick's back was toward the quarry, and as the donkey made a lurch, the rope, rotten by exposure so long, broke off and poor Dick was precipitated into the rocky incline and tumbled lifeless to the bottom.

At the inquest it was asked if any blame could rest upon anyone for the sad accident that had happened. It was agreed that the mischievous prank of some unknown boys was hardly closely enough connected with the event to link them together as cause and effect; but there was scarce one present besides the Coroner who did not recall in mind the unfortunate bachelor's dislike for the "blasted chillern."

IV.

AN OLD CONTEMPTIBLE.

" Heard melodies are sweet but those unheard are sweeter."
—*Keats.*

" His eyes were in his mind."
—*Coleridge.*

IN a journey across the Moors some weeks ago, I came across a soldier who was serving for the whole period of the Great War, with the exception of a few months at its close, when for the first time he was wounded. But the wound was then the severest that I have heard of without killing, for it left him totally deprived of both sight and hearing. There he lives with his mother in their quiet cottage home in a beautiful moorside village, a mutilated and truncated being, never hoping again either to see the landscape of Exmoor or to hear any sounds pleasing or repulsive. He spoke away freely to me when by the Braille he had been informed of my presence. There is now, it appears, a machine which strikes out the information desired in Brail-print, and it is then set before him and he first reads and then begins to talk. During the introduction and when he has asked questions (of which he has learnt to be sparing) he waits patiently, conscious that his turn has gone for a moment, but will come back again, and it is wonderful that he seems to know of the presence of a stranger, and is on the alert as soon as you arrive. It is said also that he knows *who*, among his intimate acquaintances, is in the room before he is told.

Of course, he is supplied with all that the Braille system can give, and for the first time I have had the opportunity of carefully observing the wonderful amount of victory that science and sympathy have obtained over the deprivation of the great senses of human life.

It is but a short time ago that the totally blind, and totally deaf, were left entirely to their own resources in combating their misfortunes, except that they were cared for more particularly by their relatives and friends, and eventually also in Institutions. It was only about seventy years ago that Braille (himself blind) invented the system which more than anything besides has brought relief to the tedium of the blind, and the use of aids to hearing (for very few are stone deaf) has come about in the wake of electric discovery. There seems, however, a good deal more chance of help from science in regard to hearing than in regard to sight, for whereas the loss of sight can only be compensated by aiding the other senses to partially fill its place, the loss of hearing (very seldom a complete loss) can be restored by the use of scientific instruments. I know of a good many deaf people who can hear quite easily with the electrified "trumpet" carried about with them and applied to the ear.

In this connection I cannot help wondering how far scientific discovery will go in widening the area and deepening the penetration of these marvellous faculties of hearing and sight. If our ancestors of only a hundred years ago were to come back to life again, what a change they would see in this direction only. By introducing an electric force we now hear articulate sounds and voices hundreds of miles away, and the Wireless mutation of telephony has made it possible to hear music and speech within a very large radius. A Wireless Installation has lately been set

up in one very isolated farm upon the Moors, fifteen hundred feet above the sea, and twelve miles from any town or large village, and there every day is heard the news twelve hours before it appears in the daily journals, and an exquisite concert is turned on and enjoyed by members of the family sitting around their own fireside after their work is done. It is also a near prospect that pictures of living scenes will soon be thrown on a screen and be seen far and wide simultaneously with the living act. Likewise the faculty of both seeing and hearing is penetrating inwards almost to infinity, for the microscope enables us "to see the invisible," and the inaudible noise of an insect's antennæ furbishing amongst infinitesimal particles is rendered audible by the Scientist's instruments.

I entered into a long conversation with our blind, deaf soldier on my second visit to him, and he gave me an account of his awakening to a new world as he recovered from his wounds. "I awoke from sleep," he said, "but I imagined that I was still dreaming, for I could see nothing, nor could I hear a single movement of the nurse who held some food to my lips. But I took it in merely to see what would be the result. My taste was perfect, and I took more till I was satisfied. Then I slept again after talking or making words with my mouth, for I never knew if those first utterances were ever heard. When I woke again, I felt all around me and concluded that I was lying down in a bed, and I began to speak aloud. Then someone took my hand and passed my finger along some letters again and again till I made out the words "DO NOT SPEAK." So I concluded from this and also from the discomfort and pain I felt at the slightest movement in my body, that I was still very ill. So I lay for days without either speaking or moving, but I felt that my condition was not getting

worse. Then by gradual stages I was allowed to speak and my hand was directed again over the short words of reply. As I recovered more strength, longer and longer messages were given me to read for myself, and I felt the sensitiveness of my finger-tips increasing. For when awake I touched everything about me, to see if I could make out what it was. The messages excited me very much, and I looked forward to feeling them and making lengthy replies. Thus I went on until instead of great letters of the alphabet I was taught to use the Braille, and I found it when learnt much more easy to read."

I was struck with most melancholy pity for this brave, intelligent, but unfortunate man, and I was beginning to think that the best thing I could wish for him was that he might die. He went on, however, at my suggestion, to tell me that since his two senses were lost, his mind has "turned inwards," and he is, when not in conversation, for ever carrying on some mental speculation which gives him intense pleasure. Before his illness he was always occupied, he said, in matters of the senses—since then he has developed a passion for meditation. His senses, he assured me, *shut out his vision* and *obscured and confused his hearing*, and though he did not say so, the impression he left upon my mind at my departure was that he was quite indifferent to the losses he had sustained, and that he did not pretend to be, but really was not only completely reconciled to, but even glorying in, his deprivations.

Now, it is one of the corner-stones of Jack Crascombe's philosophy that there are compensations, either open or secret, in every state of human existence, exactly equalizing everybody's condition; that the rich and affluent have their advantages nullified by restless ennui or mental care; that the knowledge of the learned is bought at a high price

for which the simple and ignorant do not pay ; that power is attended by its weakening sense of responsibility and danger—and so on through all the pleasures and pains, the desires and repulsions, the powers and weaknesses, of the human body and mind. When I related to him the condition of the blind-deaf soldier, he dwelt longer upon this topic than he is wont to do, and I am hoping that it is a sign that, as he advances in age, and ripens in his acquaintance with me, he will indulge in more dialectic upon all subjects ; for it is one of the difficulties I have in talking with him that he is so brief in his discussion of any matter that I have frequently to go away and think for some days over his conclusion before I can see the processes of his mind.

It has lately, therefore, been a serious speculation with me whether this natural balancing of things in life is not more complete than some people would believe, and whether the efforts to equalize the conditions of human existence artificially are not often attended by failure, or even by making matters worse. For instance, one of the desires of social reform is to give every one born into this world an equal chance in life ; to handicap the " fortunate " and adventitiously to help the weak. Now the greatest of all " starts " in life is to be born with a large brain and a healthy, strong body, and the greatest of all injustices (seemingly) is that one is endowed with these faculties and another is deprived of them, and I should like to ask the social reformer who aims at " giving every one an equal chance " why he does not attack this monstrous evil ! No doubt he would reply that the attempt would be ridiculous, as the inequalities lie outside the possibility of human interference, but by admitting this he would be tearing up his brief for the whole case.

But as for the sense of sight, many have thought that it does interfere with the faculty of abstract thought. It is a common practice with all kinds of people to shut their eyes when struggling with thoughts and calculations to which their mind is only just equal, and did not one of the greatest of ancient thinkers put his own eyes out in order to give his mind more freedom? It is interesting to recall the number and eminence of men that have been blind. Homer, the greatest of all Classic poets, was blind.

> "Be that blind bard who on the Chian Strand,
> By those deep sounds possessed with inward light,
> Beheld the Iliad and the Odyssey
> Rise to the swelling of the voiceful sea."

Our own Milton was blind, and he saw the vast drama of "Paradise Lost" and "Regained." One of his sonnets shows how a naturally impatient and querulous soul (if we are rightly instructed as to his private character) can rise to the sublime spiritual heights of utter self-surrender as the result of yielding up the faculty of sensuous vision:

> "When I consider how my light is spent,
> Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
> And that one talent which is death to hide
> Lodged with me useless, though my soul were bent
> To serve therewith my Master and present
> My true account, lest He returning chide;
> Doth God exact day labour light denied?
> I fondly ask. But patience to prevent
> That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
> Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
> Bear His mild yoke they serve Him best. His state
> Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed
> And post o'er land and ocean without rest,
> They also serve who only stand and wait."

Going back into the region of Mythology (to pass over Samson's exploits) Cupid is represented as the blind God of Love, and there is displayed in the creation of this

character a great amount of philosophic and illuminating thought. It was one of the jibes of Christian teachers in the early days of her triumph over the Greek and Roman mythology that the characters of the gods were a haphazard medley of supernatural persons without any philosophy displayed in their invention. But for this one at least the jibe is unjust, for Cupid was a blind boy shooting his arrows at random into the populace about him; and the moral of this is not only that here and there and everywhere mortals were unaccountably struck by Love, but another moral lay still deeper down in the picture of the blind god. "Love is blind" we now say, and for that reason it can see things in the beloved which indifference and hatred could never discover—and the thought was not absent from the ancient philosophers who built up the character of the blind God of Love. The poet Coleridge was the first, I think, to put this boldly forward in his sonnet "To a Lady":

> "I've heard of reasons manifold
> Why Love must needs be blind.
> But this the best of all I hold—
> His eyes were in his mind.
> . . . . . .
> What outward forms and fashions are
> He guesseth but in part;
> But what within is good and fair
> He see'th with his heart."

Whether the loss of the faculty of hearing is less serious than that of sight, or whether the latter is more generally indicative of a weakening constitution and the former associated with a sort of hardihood and robustness of physical strength, I do not know, but it is certain that there is an amount of humour which is regularly and allowably drawn from the antics of the deaf which would not be tolerated or even attempted in the case of the blind.

Everyone probably has been touched with pity by the blind man's begging dog in which the dumb companion seems to show an active sympathy for its poor master; and who has not had his soul suddenly stirred by some sepulchral voice of the suppliant sitting or standing in a corner near some dense traffic with regular penetrating monotony praying the passers-by to "Pity the Poor Blind?"

Of late years, perhaps, with the growth of suspicion, the sympathy and pity aroused by these dramatic appeals has been modified by the knowledge that the characters in these scenes have been sometimes mere actors and that the collections they have made from the charitable public have not only resulted in a comfortable existence without work, but also in considerable fortunes. Doctor Healy told us at the Club the other day that a friend of his once made a wager that he and a trained dog would exist for a year by simulating blindness. He not only won his wager, but lived in his usual middle-class style at good hotels in his travels, and at the end of the period handed over to an Asylum for the real Blind a large anonymous donation into the bargain. It is well, therefore, that in a properly regulated community the practice should cease —as it has.

But for all these things humour has never been allowed to make capital of the Blind. The loss of sight has always been associated with the christening of the soul. Not so, however, with the loss of hearing, for every day there are told stories which illustrate the funniness of some contre-temps in association with the deaf.

There was an Exmoor man employed by a friend of mine whose slight deafness was so ably managed by him that he contrived to hear all he wanted to hear but sheltered

under his deficiency when convenient. Thus if he was in doubt what answer to give to a question "Wăt Zur?" was useful in affording time to think of an answer; but it was dangerous to talk secrets in his presence even *sotto voce*—he would be sure to hear them.

On the occasion of my discussing this topic with Jack Crascombe, he told me a story which he had heard from my father in illustrating the humorous side of his theory of compensations. Two elderly farmers met in the village street last century, and one of them was very deaf, but exceedingly hearty. "How be 'e Mā-āster? I ha'nt a-zeed 'e zince las' Kingsburnton Vair," said the deaf man, extending his hand to the other. "Aw, I bă-ant very wull, Mā-āster. I've a-got this yer rheumatizzy about me. I be āāching all over as I stands yer—like zo you'd putt ivery stick in the hood-house to mă." "Capical! Capical!" said the chubby-faced neighbour, beaming all over with healthy, hardy good nature. "And 'ow's the Missus?" "Ah, 'er's turrable pōōrly sure 'nough, Māāster. 'Er'th a-got the doctor to 'er ivery day vor the last month, and I be turrable ve-ard 'er 'll niver come down-stairs no more." "Capical! Capical!" persisted the other, his good nature even more evident as he went on: "And 'ow's the bo-ees?" "Aw, purty middlin' they be," he replied, looking round in a little despair, "But Dan'l hath a-drawd down 'is 'os and broak 'is collar-boan out there t'other day —zo us be *in a bad way o' 't, baant us?*" He raised his voice each time he answered, till at last shouting as loud as he could, he turned the question back upon him to finish up with. "An' 'ow be all your volks?" he bellowed at the top of his voice. "Wull, dthank'e, Māāster, dthank'e!" was the prompt reply," I don't care if I do 'ave jis dree pennard. Dthank'e, Māāster, dthank'e!"

"D'THANK'E, MĀ-ÂSTER, D'THANK'E."

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and he seized his friend by the arm and marched him into the Lamb Hotel for a drink!

* * * * * *

In ending these reflections suggested by the brave and gentle Blind-Deaf Soldier of the Moors, I should like to give the outline of a sérmon which our Reverend Cleric preached at the Exmoor Blind Asylum last year, on what he called "the Sixth Sense," but this must form the subject of the next chapter.

V.

"THE SIXTH SENSE."

TEXT: "They heard the voice of the Lord God, walking in the garden in the cool of the day."—*Genesis*, iii, 18.

"They were full of eyes *within*."—*Rev.*, iv, 8.

"We gather from a branch of knowledge which we call Psychology that there are five ways in which we obtain knowledge of things around us, and without these mediums we should know nothing of the objects by which we are encompassed. These powers are called our five senses. The first is the sense of Touch, another Taste, a third Sight, a fourth Hearing, and the last Smell. Without these we should be like the log or the sod of earth—without feeling or sensibility or apprehension of any kind.

And we find some people who are devoid of sometimes one, sometimes more than one, of these senses. Perhaps the most frequent of these missing senses is that of hearing. How very many people there are who are deaf! Some there are who are blind. The nerve of the retina has decayed and no impression is left upon the mind of what others see, and this fruitful source of pleasure is no more for them. A few perhaps lose the sense of smell. In illness the sense of taste may and does depart, while in paralysis the sense of touch may disappear and leave one or more limbs as senseless as the limbs of a withered oak. But the whole man in complete health has them all, and what mysterious and interesting powers we have been entrusted with!

Now I am going to point out to you that we possess another sense—a sixth sense—another power of apprehending things around us, things in Earth and things in Heaven.

We men and women possess this faculty alone to ourselves. It may be very good in some, very healthy, very sound, but in others it is dull—and we may lose it altogether like the other senses. It is given to us that we may know and feel, that we may apprehend what they do not apprehend—namely that there is a world around us which our sight does not speak to us of and which we can neither touch or taste or hear.

A name has been sought for this sense (for sense it is) and it has been thought best to call it the Religious sense, for want of a better name. But it matters little what you may call it, for if you leave it un-named you will not destroy its power. It is, at present, left out of all books upon psychology—but it is seated in the mind, and instead of declining with more reading and education it increases as the intelligence deepens and quickens. Some people prize this faculty of seeing the invisible, cultivate it, protect it, try to make it clear and pure, while others value it not, allow it to be neglected, nay try to destroy it, and some (let us hope it is only a few) come to be deprived of it altogether.

Now this power of apprehending the spiritual world—the religious sense—has some very important characteristics.

1. It acts to some extent in agency with the other senses—for instance with the sense of sight. I know there are some who deny this and say that to communicate with Heaven you must always close your eyes. I should rather say "you must sometimes close your eyes." Some sights lend positive aid to devotion such as pictures of a religious

nature, also sculpture ; and upon whom does not the proportions of good architecture have a devotional effect ? The atmosphere of a beautifully built church is full of devotion, and ceremonial seems to help some to devotion. But some sights distract and hinder prayer and praise, and we must shut them out.

Again the sense of hearing undoubtedly may lend aid to devotion ; so much so that people are in danger of mistaking the musical sensation for those of devotion. But music is undoubtedly, at least to many people, a vestibule to the Temple of God. Some even think the sense of smell is exercised in devotion and prize the use of incense. Touch and taste are both exercised in the Sacraments and are used as assisting in apprehending the unseen.

2. This spiritual sense also resembles the other sense in that it can be marred and even destroyed altogether, so that we sometimes find warped and shrunken beings who have lost this sense by which Man is allowed to apprehend his Maker. And when a faculty is lost it is not the same as if it had never been possessed. If so there would not be much punishment attached to this reckless waste. There is always a haunting feeling of the " Might-have been " which is undoubtedly one just means of retribution. There are breaches so wide that they can never be made up, the sand in the glass of probation can and will run out, and the talent that has not merely been laid up to rust and spoil but has been cast out wantonly and trodden under foot will rise up in Eternity in all its ghostly resurrection to be the chief witness against the soul.

Now it is this faculty—this organ or sense which God wishes to quicken and make perfect in you and me. Our first parents, it is said, in Eden, had it perfectly. They

never lost communion with God until the Fall severed the hitherto unbroken union. Their spiritual sense was healthy and clear. The Angels in Heaven have it in all its perfections. Satan and his angels had it before they fell into rebellion, according to Scriptural tradition.

But this power of spiritual apprehension differs from the other senses we possess in two or three particulars.

1. In being more closely united to the *Sense of Right and Wrong*. There is a feeling in the mind confirmed by Holy Scripture that the strongest powers of the Invisible world are powers given over to goodness and truth and are opposed to wickedness and falsehood. The obtuse and dull sense to the spiritual, is the obtuse and dull sense where matters of conscience are involved also. To perverted minds only there are such things as witchcraft, visions of evil spirits, sorcery, or casting out of devils "by Beelzebub, the prince of devils." Evil spirits must obey the mandates of Heavens, for there is among themselves none of that Heaven-born grace of obedience and subordination—but anarchy, perversity, self-destructive, and finally self-annihilating contention. Spiritual vision, when awakened sees only, can see only, the Spirits of Holiness and Light as those that have real power over the soul; otherwise it is not awakened. The minds that have seen the evil part of the unseen world to the exclusion of Heaven and the Angels of God, are just those minds that can traverse this world for a life-time looking into their fellow-being's faces, seeing nothing in them but carnality, maliciousness, the devil and all his works. Hence spiritual vision clear, and the clear sense of right and wrong generally go together, grow together, ripen together; but, alas, they also die together.

2. It must not however be overlooked, I speak of it a

second time, that when the spiritual sense dies or is dead, then Superstition with all its ridiculous stories, with all its hideous contortions of religion rises from the very spot where the spiritual sense has been laid to rot. Some of the greatest blasphemers in life have been the most superstitious in death. *Superstition* is the haunting ghost of Religion—if you murder and bury Religion her disembodied Spirit will stalk unmolested about the corridors and apartments of your mind, submitting you to torture unspeakable,

3. But to the simple-minded Believer this sense of the Unseen grows stronger and stronger as old-age and death approaches. "Perfect love casteth out fear," and he has learnt not to fear but to love the unseen. There is no fear of being alone, for God is with him. Death will only clear the mental and spiritual vision—and as for this world and all its beauties, he looks upon them, I imagine, much as a grown-up person looks upon the toys that amused him when a child—with no contemptuous scorn, but simply with the feeling that he has grown away from them.

There are various ways of ill-using your natural senses here. You may violently destroy them—but who in his right mind would do so? But sometimes people make violent efforts to destroy their spiritual faculty. Think of the pain they must go through before they succeed—the marks of it can be read upon the face, and the fruits of it I have spoken of already. Sometimes it is by neglect only that the senses leave the body—a neglected cataract upon the eye, or disease in the ear, and the sense is gone. There is no source of losing the spiritual sense so productive as neglect. Neglect of meditation and reading, neglect of private prayers, neglect of public worship, neglect of Sacraments. Thousands of people could not find a real excuse, but would really have to say "Neglect" if

asked the cause of their gradually dying sense of the Unseen. Meanwhile, the sense *is* dying apace—it is starving for want of food, parching with thirst, suffocating for want of a religious breathing-place.

All sensible people, on the other hand, take great trouble to preserve those other senses which are required so long as you remain in this beautiful world; why then should they neglect this spiritual sense when they know it will be the only one that will be of any use in that world to which they go? "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" And yet it is a fact that the soul dies without its own spiritual nourishment.

Shall we then determine to give our own spiritual faculties more nourishment, more food, and induce others to do the same; so that we and they may hear the voice of God, not merely in the dark evening, the cool of the day when overtaken by some rebellious mischief—but always hear, always see, always feel the beauty and peace of that Spiritual world for which we were primarily made and to which we must inevitably go."

VI.

"SQUIRE STAWELL" OF WITHIEL FLOREY

"A noticeable Man with large grey eyes."
Wordsworth—"Stanzas."

WHEN in the Civil War the Stawells of Cothelstone fell upon evil times and their lands were confiscated by the Commonwealth, and the redoubtable Parliamentary General Blake reduced Cothelstone Manor to ruins and desolation, one of Sir John Stawell's sons escaped across to the Brendon Hills, and, starting farming in a humble way, succeeded in establishing the pretty little estate of Withiel Florey—one of the quietest and most out of the way places to be found. This Stawell was so successful in agriculture that he and his successors added farm to farm and moor to moor in this lowland upon the hills, and at the beginning of last century the Squire Stawell of those days was farming about two thousand acres of his own estate, with a detached Manor House and grounds below the church in a park-like paddock by the Haddeo stream. Such is the lamentable conciseness of Collinson's "History of Somerset," written in 1791, that he is contented with this note: "A very neat house and gardens in this parish belong to Thomas Stawel, Esq." What an amount of rustic life and activity is buried in this note! My father, however, remembered the death of this Squire Stawell, which occurred when he was a boy of about nine,

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and he received such a description of the proceedings of the old patriarchal notability that he in his turn recounted it to me in touching, forceful language, with simple, telling allusion, and the picture of it has lived in my memory these many years.

This little parish of Withiel has its ancient connection with the Floris of Norman times, and their story will form the subject of another chapter. It lies on the southern slope of the Brendon Hills some ten miles equi-distant from Dulverton, Wiveliscombe, and Williton. The soil is very good, and the aspect favourable, though the altitude is great—its extreme remoteness alone makes it peculiar among the upland parishes of West Somerset. But this feature rendered the place more suitable for the growth of manorial appurtenance and patriarchal overlordship, which, under a benevolent master, made it resemble, at any rate a hundred years ago, a large family rather than a civil and ecclesiastical division of the county.

Here, then, lived Squire Stawell, farming his large farm, letting out his cows to dairymen dotted about all over the estate, with about fifty people working for and totally dependent upon him, and among them only one of his own class—the Parson—whose meagre stipend he augmented by an annual gift and a neat house, rent free, in which to live. Here, indeed, as in an absolute monarchy, there was ample room for fabulous benevolence or crushing tyranny, according to the bent of the despotic mind at "the Manor House." Whatever his predecessors may have been, the present Squire Stawell was a curious mixture of both these qualities, and he added to them also certain ingredients of pleasing comicality and practical common sense, and, where farming was concerned, a touch of the devoted artist as well.

It was one of his sayings, handed on to and adopted by my father, that the profession of farming is " two thirds an art and one third a business : and if," said he, " thee d'sn't love the art, I pray thee, have nort to do with the business ! " He would then expatiate in his discourse upon the niggardliness, the laziness, and false economy, of many farmers around him. He would talk of their " habit of insulting Nature " by impoverishing their land, and then complaining of their rents, and the seasons, and the weather. They grumble, he would say, at the results of their bad farming, and they never try what good husbandry will do. And he followed in practice the doctrine that he so ardently preached, for his land was notable in all West Somerset for its high state of cultivation.

He loved to see all his employees in one field in haymaking or harvest time, to work with them, and preside over them while they ate and drank their meals in the open air—breakfast, dinner, and " nummet." He provided the meals from the House on such occasions. Often, in those days before machines were thought of, the scythe-mowers began with the first light of day—ten to fifteen lusty men, with their sneads swathing in the succulent grass well lubricated by the heavy dew, and their steel blades gleaming in the sun at each stroke, their scythe-stones swung in " budgets " to their waist-belts. Beginning at the head of the meadow, they struck down across, all in a slanting row to the bottom and all trooping back to the top again, where the whetting of the scythes took place, the echo of which resounded up the valley, along with merry talk and laughter, with joke and thrust and parry as the work went on. But it was very hard work, and needed strong men to do it. It was thirsty work, too, and frequently would come the anxious enquiry " Where's

the virkin?" For the firkin was the little wooden barrel of cider, just small enough to raise with both hands to the mouth, and fitted at the bung with mouth-piece to meet the thirsty lips. It was the common loving cup of the fields. At length breakfast time would come about 8 a.m., when the women-folk arrived bringing large baskets of beautifully cooked provisions—fried bacon and potatoes, whole meal bread and tea; when they rested a whole hour for their hearty meal upon the hay. Dinner time came at twelve noon, when probably the whole of one large field lay mown, and then the troop would gather up their odds and ends and move off to join the haymakers in another field.

The making of the hay was done totally by picks and rakes. Frequently thirty to forty people could be seen in one field, all tossing the hay or turning the swards or collecting it by hand, and a more picturesque scene can hardly be imagined. It was finally rolled into one or two large and long "rows" running the length of the field and then loaded on to drays or sleighs or dumped upon the balancing saddles of a multitude of pack-horses, which were trained to wend their way to the stack like the succeeding links of a chain, often unattended except at the two ends of the journey. In this way all the haulage of the farm was done—manures distributed over the fields, lime brought from long distances, mixed with earth, and spread over pasture and tillage. There was not a pair of wheels in the parish at this period; hence the narrowness of the roads to this day.

In the evening, about 5 o'clock, one of the pack-horses bore the hot tea and cakes and bread and butter down to the field, and this was the "Drinkin's" or "Nummet." The former name was used in North Devon, and the latter in West Somerset. "Nummet," I believe, meant the meal

with " no meat." Originally, perhaps, there was no food at all (*i.e.* no meat) at this interval of rest, for " mait " about Exmoor means " food " even to this day. " Nummet," then, was a pleasant time, particularly if the work was forward and there was no sign of rain, and the Squire and ladies from the House would join the thirsty workers with their own tea-set, and pour out the welcome refreshment for them, with smiles and kind words. It was a veritable old-fashioned pic-nic party, with the delicious sense of industriousness thrown in. Squire Stawell loved all these things, and, while young enough, joined for a while in all phases of the work, for there was nothing done upon the farm that he could not personally do.

At the end of Harvest, there was always the ceremony of the " Last-Sheaf." All trooped round the dray or pack-horse, with a number of firkins, while the Squire with pick in hand held aloft the golden bundle and flung it with a triumphant swing into the load. Then there arose a great hurrah ! from the gang, which re-echoed over the parish, and the party, after drinking the firkin dry, escorted the last load back to the farm and joined in the great hall for a Harvest Home Supper, which resembled (except for the ashen fagot) the feast of Christmas Eve.

It was at such times as these that both the imperiousness and benevolence of the Squire was seen to good effect. He always in the field carried a tool of his own of the kind that was being used—scythe, pick, or rake—and would cut in with the rest, often talking aloud the while, and easily outstrip the fastest worker, for he was of powerful athletic build. Generally his talk was good humoured and elevating, and a distinct rising of the spirits of the hands was noticeable when he joined them. But woe betide the slacker or he who was " sugaring " in his work ! And his

quick eye detected also the really tired ones, and he spoke gently, setting them apart by themselves where there was no pressure, or even ordering them to stop and rest. Perhaps he would notice one of the women workers whose baby was crying by the hedge-row, telling her to go and comfort it, for it was the custom then for women to turn out in the harvest field and earn a harvest of wages. It was not thought of as a hardship in those days of general poverty and industry, but a privilege not to be missed. Then as the little army passed the "virkin" in the round, he would suddenly call upon them to halt, lay down their tool and pass round the firkin until all were satisfied, and then on again. So he personally drilled his folk like a little army, and they all seemed to like it well and to be happy under his impulsive, hasty, but generous control.

There was one of his old labourers called Will Bamson, who was so happy in his master's service that he refused to stop working at seventy when the Squire assigned him his cottage and a pension for life. He seemed to look upon this move of his master as a fad to be tolerated patiently, and he was quite cross when the news was broken to him, until he was assured that he could go on working without pay if he liked. This he did for ten years more, and no change was seen in the punctilious performance of his work, except that he was even more interested in the general proceedings, and more free in the interchange of opinions with the Squire as he grew more aged. When, for instance, the master would lament the spoiling of good hay in the rainy summers, Will would reply: "Tidden no odds' bout the 'ole dry 'ay Māāster—got plenty gūde turmits wănce!" But if the drought had ruined the roots he would say: "No odds 'bout a vū 'ole wattery turmits Māāster—plenty o' gūde 'ay wănce!"

This good old man was noted on the Brendon Hills and all over Exmoor for his cramp and crafty sayings, which have passed into oral proverbs and live on now as classics of a by-gone time. It was Will Bamson who, when he heard of any farmer neglecting his business, would always say :

> "If a farmer wants to thrive
> He must hold the plough or drive,"

Meaning that he must either do the work himself, or organize others on a large scale. To an idling hand in the hay-field he would say " Wăt be māākin' there ? 'Ens' nestés ? " He was once particularly down on one of the men employed with him, for he could never get him to do his share. After helping along for some time, the fellow would adopt the ruse of pretending to be looking for something, and thus steal a rest, while his industrious companion toiled alone. " What be lookin' vor ? " said Will one day. " I'll tell thee what thee'rt lookin' vor *all thee time*—Zindown, Zaturday night, an' Quătter-Day ! " For at Sundown they left work for the day, Saturday night the weekly payments were made, and at Quarter day their job work was settled up.

Will was particularly severe in his judgment of useless fineness in man, woman, or beast. When anything did or looked well only under very favourable conditions, he would say : " Aye ! Aye ! A mid zummer 'os and a Zinday 'oman ! " and a curious little story is told of him which shows up the general poverty and frugality of the times, as well as the quaintness of family temper. The following is a dialogue between Will and his little son, Tommy, at the dinner table :

" Bit o' bāācon, Tommy ? "

" Ees, plaize, Father."

"Mind thē tettie tū 'en then!"
"Beān, Tommy?"
"Ees plaize, Father!"
"Mind thē tettie tū 'en then!"
"Drap o' gra-avy, Tommy?"
"Ees plaize, Father!"
"Mind thē tettie tū 'en then!"

So the lads of those days were brought up to frugality, industry, and good manners, laying the foundations of hardy constitutions of good, subservient, and contented characters, surpassing in body and in mind the men of our own time.

Squire Stawell also, and others in his position, had more philosophy in them than some of their modern successors. They used the vernacular tongue and pronunciation very freely, but it was the vehicle often for penetrating thought and sparkling wit. Sometimes in his thoughtful moods the Squire would touch upon profound topics and anticipate in his homely language and simple rustic philosophy the problems of modern thought. And I warrant that his conclusions were as near the truth as the most learned of later times with all their "new theology" and "higher criticism" of ancient texts. "It zeem'th to me, Bob," he would say to my grandfather, "that if Religion be all a fable, it is, howsoever, the best dthing vor leeve by! And if it be the best dthing vor leeve by, I reckon 'tis the best dthing vor die by." I thought of this shrewd but simple dictum the other day, as I was reading the utterances of one of the most popular of our bishops, who said in a speech or sermon that "If Christ and His Religion were not true, it answers so closely to man's needs that it would have been necessary to invent it all."* Surely

* Compare with this Voltaire's saying: "Si Dieu n'existait pas, il faudrois l'inventer."

these two thinkers are not very far apart. And if you were to go one step further and admit the invention to be already made, there would result but little change in either the order and regulation of life or the worship and service of God. Jack Crascombe, who is the present day successor of Squire Stawell in the philosophy of the Moors, will give us a further instalment of these matters in another chapter, if I can persuade him as he grows older to talk more about it.

Mostly Squire Stawell's thoughts were deductions from experience. "I say, Bob," said the Squire to my grandfather, after prolonged silence, riding home from Wiveliscombe market, "There be tū dthings that puzzle me in this life. Wăn is that the fāāce of a roăg and the fāāce of an honest man be zo much alike that thee ca's'n tell the difference between 'em; and t'other is that as zoon's a fellow knawth how vor leeve he'th a-got vor die."

It is well to point out that many of such utterances as these are to be found in the writings of Thomas Carlyle, but the Prophet of Chelsea had not written when my grandfather heard Squire Stawell give utterance to these words. He is also undoubtedly the author of the dictum "There be thirty million of people in England they d'tell me—mostly fūls, I reckon."

The Squire was a bachelor managing his domestic affairs first by his mother and then by his sister and finally by a house-keeper; nor did he hide the extreme views he held of the inferiority of women under his pronounced and easily detected love for them both as relations and means of pastime. But from business and the heavier matters of life he kept them all very far away. What he would have thought of modern developments among women I do not know. The subject formed the topic upon which he and his Parson were often in laughing debate. One

Saturday evening they were as usual pleasantly disagreeing on St. Paul's attitude to women, when the Parson ended by enumerating the passages in which there is mention of "holy women." On the Sunday following, the Squire read the Lesson in the Church from the Book of Job, in which the Patriarch's wife advises him to "curse God and die," to which Job's answer was that she spoke "as one of the FOOLISH women speak." But the Squire persistently carried on the controversy by reading it with this emphasis and meaning: "Thou speakest as one of the foolish WOMEN speak"—looking round to the Parson as he read it. And the next time they met he added "As for your HOLY women, they *quarrel* a lot more'n any other sort of women."

There was a Pound in the parish, in which stray animals were impounded, but the law regarding the proceedings was not in favour with the Squire, as he claimed the right as Lord of the Manor to pasture what he pleased along the highways, particularly pigs, which established the habit of returning home at regular meal-times, and so were seldom lost. But at the end of the parish there lived a farmer who owned no allegiance to the Squire, for his holding did not belong to the Estate. Whenever this farmer saw the Squire's old sows near the Pound, he drove them in and locked the gate, and poundage had to be paid. The Squire, however, was equal to the occasion. He instructed his swine-herd to soundly whip every animal around and around the Pound before taking it out, and let the pigs graze as usual along the roads. The farmer persisted in trying to get the sows into the Pound. "Ough!" said the swine, and turned right about in every direction at the gate. Again and again he would drive them up. "Ough! Ough!"—and again they would turn another way, and he had to give up the game in

despair, for none of the Squire's pigs would enter the Pound thereafter.

Though there was an element of cruelty in this proceeding, he would rebuke this quality in his dependents when he noticed it. One of his old dairymen regularly and methodically kicked his mischievous sow whenever he passed her in the yard. "Why dust thee kick thee pig like that, Joe; 'er be lying down quiet enough?" "Aye! Squire, but if 'er do-ănt wănt it now, 'er'll wănt it avore I d' zee 'er ageān, I reckon."

Sheep-shearing was another operation in which every man and boy on the Estate was simultaneously engaged, five to ten in each barn, all snipping—snapping—at the same time, in their white duck suits, and waited on by the females with baskets of refreshments and cooling drinks. It was begun on the 1st of June, after the sheep had been carefully washed by plunging them in the heads of the ponds and letting them swim through to the shallow side and thus out, staggering under the weight of water absorbed in their heavy fleeces. A bleating of sheep in ten different places in the farm announced the beginning of shearing, and across the fields would be seen the eager white figures wending their way in every direction. In the barns, the youngsters would struggle with the lambs, and laugh and be laughed at if the young animal got the mastery of the young hand. The white wool came off in graceful folds as the work went on. It was dear at that time, for Australia then sent none to England, and other than home produce was little known. Hence it was a lucrative harvest, and shearing was well and pleasantly paid work, and took on here the character of a merry-making party, like the operations of hay-making and harvest. In the evening the duck clothes were taken off and the youngsters played

games in the field while their elders looked on and drank and smoked and sang songs.

In the barn, however, there was a concerted persecution of an intruder who would not or even could not shear. Once, a dairyman's son called Jim Tarr, who had become a grocer's assistant in Taunton, and had come home for a holiday, strolled into the barn dressed in broad cloth and a top hat, with a flower in his button-hole, thinking to impress the party with his superior but idle ascendancy. He approached one and another busy shearer with condescending affability, hoping merely to join in the fun and feasting when the work was done. Contemptuous glances were exchanged by a few of the shearers as they paused to straighten their backs, and soon one let up his sheep suddenly and it head, properly directed, passed between the broad cloth trousers, with the result that the "fine gen'leman" was capsized—the top-hat rolling on the floor amid the wool. One kicked it, and then another, until it reached the doorway, where the owner picked it up, battered and covered with wool and dirt, fitting well with his own general condition—the whole escapade being punctuated with explosions of derisive laughter.

Towards the end of the year, the work of the farm was mostly connected with the hedge-making out-of-doors, and the threshing, winnowing, and reed-making in the barns; and as corn was then dear and all the roofs were thatched with reed, and there was no flour to be had except that which was sent to the mill as wheat or barley from the farm, there was plenty of suitable occupation for the long winter months. Will Bamson worked at one barn all his life, sometimes with a helper, sometimes alone. He began as soon as there was light, and left when he could see no more; sitting on the straw for rest and refreshment in the middle of the day.

The " Drashel " or Flail was the only implement in use then, for the " drum " driven by horse-power in a round-house did not come till later. The Drashel was made of two sticks, one long one of ash and the other short and thick made of holly, the former being the handle and the latter the lash, as it were, of a veritable wooden whip. A swivel of horn was fixed to the handle through the ring of which was passed another hinge fastened to the holly log. Both sides of the hinge were strongly secured to the wood by thongs of the toughest nature, for the strain upon them in a day's work was heavy, jerky, and continuous. The monotonous bang, bang, of the flail resounding across the otherwise silent farm has now died away for ever from rural life. But it was a welcome sound in those days, bespeaking laborious industry for the guerdon of daily bread, and to anyone who has heard it, it recalls the poetry of Gray's Elegy. There were two particular barns on the Squire's farm standing each in its valley with a hill between them, and each barn sent out its plodding report from dawn till eve into the quiet air of the winter's day. In one, Will Bamson worked his single flail with its thud—thud—thud ; in the other, two men wielded two flails with double industrious action—thud, thud !—thud, thud !—thud, thud ! The Squire, standing on the hill between them, was heard one day thus to soliloquise : " I hear that my work goeth on. Here it is Rent ! Rent ! Rent !—and there it is Rates-and-Taxes ! Rates-and-Taxes ! Rates-and-Taxes ! Yes, surely, my work goeth on, and our way will be paid, and my people will be able vor leeve another year."

But a different view of the matter was taken by the crafty but loyal and interested herdsman, Tom Moles. Putting his head in at the door of Blagdon's barn one day

THE "DRASHEL."

CITY OF WESTMINSTER
PUBLIC

where Bamson was working, and thinking only of the oaten straw for the oxen he fed, he remarked in a loud voice: "That's it, Beel! Be-at out the butts of mun—never mind 'bout the taps!"

At Christmas time the following song was often sung in the parties around the Ashen Fagot in honour of the "Drashel," and it has passed on orally to our day from men of this olden time.

THE SONG OF THE FLAIL.

Rent! Rent! with flail ever bent,
I'll drash out the golden grain
The pillets du fly to the roof up on high
Then down to the floor again.

Rent! Rent! Our steward is sent
To take up his lot and be gone!
The parson for tithe as sure's he's alive
Will come and be off wi' zome.

Rent! Rent! the wages be spent,
And chillern will ax vor their bread,
I'll turn it about and whip it all out!
For stōāns will not feed them instead.

And then there's the poor who stand at the door,
"'Gainst Chursmas plaize gee me a dole!"
And rates to provide and taxes beside,
'Tis hard work to dthink of it all!

At last what is left the varmer mus' zeft,
Vor zome he must zow vor next yer.
Then, what he can vind vor miller to grind,
Well, that he can kall *his own share!*

Squire Stawell died about the year 1838, and with him was swept away the whole of this yeoman fashion of farming in Withiel Florey as in many other places besides. The cause of these changes was rather deep-rooted in the political and social movements of the time. The Chartist upheaval was just beginning and riots occurred in various

parts of the country against the introduction of machinery which was just beginning. The theatrical side of the matter was not seen in remote places, but the news flew about and the temper of the men was affected by it, especially the younger ones. Squire Stawell's old men were dying off, and the new generation began even then to breathe a new atmosphere, with the result that he felt more and more alone as he grew old and the sense of the family-farm was being lost.

His own domestic affairs also tended towards the same result. His sisters had married and left him, and his trusted housekeeper died, and none seemed to come on who understood the peculiarities and the phases of his temper—severe and impetuous, religious and critical, thoughtful and tender-hearted—all at the same time—or at least succeeding one another like the surges of the incoming tide. After his death, for instance, his Will disclosed that not a person had been forgotten who had rendered him even a small service, but at the same time a locked-up outhouse into which none ever entered but himself contained a couple of man-traps for poachers and stealers; and such was his interest in religion that he provided for a free distribution of Bibles and prayer-books all over the parish to the end of time! How was it possible that new generations should understand such a subtly contradictory character? So he became more and more lonely, and his mind reverted to the great loss of his mother (when he was about fifty) and in solitary walks and while working about the farm he was frequently heard talking to her like a child and telling her all his troubles and speaking of his loneliness and isolation.

He had taken to fishing rather late in life, and had constructed three beautiful fish-ponds for trout and eel in

the Haddeo stream below the house, and many of his lonely hours he spent in this pastime, but it was noticed that he came back now with none of the usual sense of satisfaction even after a very brilliant catch. And yet his fishing days became more frequent, and sometimes after he had been out all day there were signs that he had not used his rod. Reports said that he used to walk round and round the largest pond and then stand for hours at the head of it gazing into its clear waters. One morning it was noised abroad that he was missing, and the pond being dragged his body was found. But on the bank they found also his rod struck deep into the ground, and on the hook a trout of unusual size still feebly finning the water and retaining a hold on life. Perhaps he slipped in while trying to land his fish.

With him passed away the last of the great Stawell family, and also a system of agriculture and country life very common in England during the Hanoverian reigns. After the breaking up of the feudal system, there was a gradual increase for centuries in the ranks of yeoman farmers, and the large Feudal estates tended to give place to smaller ones, often farmed by the owners. This process went on down to the eighteenth century, when the prosperity of the mercantile capitalists caused them to buy land again and a race of large landlords began to revive. Withiel was added to the larger estate of Luxborough, and Chargot Lodge became the seat of the Lethbridges. Eventually, as it has been recorded, the great Lethbridge family sold the whole estate to the Iron Lord, and there our story is linked up with the transitory episode of the mining on the Brendon Hills.

I cannot help reflecting, when I think of those olden patriarchal conditions of country life, that it is question-

able whether there is as much general happiness now among them after a hundred years of " progress " as there was in the days of old. The rural workers have more " education," by which is meant that they know of more things which make them discontented with their lot. Some, therefore, leave it and swell the machine-like " masses " of pale-faced, diseased exotics of the town, who look like survivals of a lost and forgotten race. Those who stay on have become rather commercial—arguing about wages and hours of work and trades unions, and think to turn the country into the town, while a third class are a greater danger still, for they look upon their employer as their natural enemy (however good a master he may be) and seem to live in perpetual fear lest by any means there should be some scrap of love lost somewhere between them. The consequences is that there are few big masters left either in heart or capital, for in their turn they naturally suppose that the last thing to seek for is the care and working of an estate which necessitates the oversight of a number of paid hands. Instead of employing as many, they employ as *few* as they can ; and they take no further interest in them than to see that they render back something adequate for a wage they are unwillingly compelled to pay.

When I compare this picture with that which I have been recalling of bygone times, there creeps over me a cloud of melancholy pessimism, which will not be dissipated till again I have spent a few days with Jack Crascombe and his Master working together like brethren upon the Moors.

VII.

THE POOR MAN'S COW.

" The cattle are grazing
Their heads never raising
There are forty feeding like one."

Wordsworth.

THE Men-of-Exmoor Club is deeply interested in all that concerns the life of the people in these romantic regions, and does not confine itself to the history of the past, the manners of the present, or even the prognostications of the future. When therefore I received the following account of a breed of cattle which bids fair to become useful and popular in these parts, I read it at a meeting of the Club. It was received with such expressions of interest that I determined to devote one paper in the further publication of it for the information of my readers. Personally I was most struck with the claim which the writer makes, that these little Dexter cattle were the original breed of the wild bovine species that inhabited the western part of Europe, including the British Isles and these hills of Exmoor, in prehistoric times. If this be so, Agriculture and History may be said to have met together in honouring these pretty little beasts, and I should like to see these once again spreading themselves all over the heather of the Moor and sheltering in its woods and valleys.

In publishing this paper, I will ask some Exmoor authority to send me an account of the famous Exmoor

Ponies, the Exmoor Horn Sheep, and the North Devon Cattle, so that in some future chapters they may find a place.

Dexter Cattle.

Ireland is the home of many combinations, (not to say contradictions), and the showyards this year have again reminded us that, in the realm of cattle, Ireland has sent into the world a breed positively phenomenal in its combination of beauty and utility of beef and milk.

This growing breed of cattle was discovered by a Mr. Dexter to maintain distinct and obstinate characteristics in the great race of Kerries. These characteristics—namely, shortness of legs, thickness of body and parts, and extreme hardiness, perseveringly showed themselves from generation to generation, and seemed to mark them out as a distinct breed within the Kerries, and, even more than that, to suggest that these animals were the original and perhaps the only kind of wild cattle inhabiting the British Isles and the West of Europe.

Such was Mr. Dexter's theory, which has now produced the growing breed of Dexters still more obstinately retaining characteristics as generations go on, and, in spite of one blemish (of which we shall speak hereafter), this breed is probably the most economical and profitable cattle that can be kept on the second and third-rate land and in rough climates.

The English Kerry and Dexter Cattle Society (secretaries, Messrs. Hammon and Craufurd, of 19, Bloomsbury Square, Lo · on, W.C.) issue a pamphlet with a concise account of the two herds together, but here I am only asked to deal with Dexters.

The Dexter is essentially a dual-purpose breed, and is especially adapted for crossing for the production of small beef, while a Dexter Shorthorn or a Dexter-Friesian cross produces a splendid milking strain, giving nearly as good a yield of milk as the pure Shorthorn or Friesian, while eliminating many of their breed's weak points in other directions.

The Dexter cattle are either whole black or whole red, the two colours being of equal merit, the bulls not exceeding 900 lbs. live weight when in breeding condition, and the cows 800 lbs.

The following description of the breed as supplied by the secretaries of the English Society will not be without interest :

Head and Neck.—Head short and broad, with great width between the eyes, and tapering gracefully towards muzzle, which should be large, with wide distended nostrils. Eyes bright, prominent, and of a kind and placid expression. Neck short, thick and deep, and well set into the shoulders, which, when viewed in front, should be wide, showing thickness through the heart, the breast coming well forward.

Horns.—These should be short and moderately thick, springing well from the head, with an inward and slightly upward curve.

Body.—Shoulders of medium thickness, full and well filled in behind ; hips wide, quarters thick and deep and well sprung, flat and wide across the loins, well ribbed up, straight underline, udder well forward, and broad behind, with well placed teats of moderate size. Legs short (especially from knee to fetlock), strong, well placed under body, which should be as close to the ground as possible. Tail well set on and level with the back.

Skin.—The skin should be soft and mellow, and handle well, not too thin ; hair fine, plentiful and silky.

These animals have largely been kept in England by well-to-do ladies and gentlemen in their parks or home farms because they are so sweetly pretty to behold. But we must remember this is not their chief and original and intrinsic value. They are, if kept for that purpose, a rent-paying cattle, and their beauty is not diminished by rent-paying conditions. They will thrive two to one where the bigger and softer breeds will do badly or even starve.

This spring has been again a test time for them. They have looked well all the drought through. They eat the roughest growth that comes—rushes and " old man's " beard being to them a feast, especially in autumn. They help to keep down weeds in a brake. Then when put into good pasture they fatten fast. They do not take long about it. Of course, the weight they put on is not great, but they do it economically. Concentrated food moves them very fast. The young things are the marvel of everybody. Put out-of-doors in January two weeks old with hay and (if there is no grass) a few roots, they live and look well. At thirteen weeks they leave the bucket and find for themselves. Immediately the grass comes in spring they forsake shelter at night and leave their hay, and then they are started on their economical career. Yearlings in winter feed on hay in open shed and what grass they can find—no roots. Their second winter they live on oaten straw and what they can find else in rough brakes or moors with no shelter. The steers can be kept to four years old if there is straw for food. When fattened they weigh up to 12 cwt. Before the war their beef was 2*d.* a pound more than other beef. The heifers mature early, yielding their

first calf at two years old, which is generally so strong that the owner had best deal with him on the first day if he wants to house him. The milk is proverbial for its richness and quantity. Butter and cream abound where they low.

In preparing to write this paper, I made a point of interviewing three business men who have had to do with Dexters, so that my own opinion should not have too much weight. The first was a London butcher who has killed and retailed many hundreds of these animals. His customers, he said, were in the habit of asking for the beef again—" that little joint you gave me last week, can you give me another now ? " A small cut from a Devon or a Shorthorn, he said, lies down flat and is a " chop or a slice of meat " but the same weight from a Dexter " stands upright and is a joint ! " That is why butchers and cooks like Dexter beef.

I next went to a Dairyman whom I knew to be in the habit of buying and milking a certain number of these little animals. " What do you think of them ? " I said. " I think so well of them," he said, " that I keep their milk separate for cream purposes, and do not sell it by the quart—it is too good."

Lastly, I met the cross-breeder and grazier, who told me that it mattered not what other breed you crossed them with, they absorbed the size and imparted the hardness and economy to the progeny and the result was one of the most useful and " rent-paying " animals to be found anywhere.

It is an interesting thing to see them exhibited at the great Show-yards, and they are gradually making their way, too, into the County and Local Shows of Cattle. I shall never forget seeing a little red Dexter bull led into

the Auction Ring at Cardiff in 1919, just after the ponderous mammoth Shorthorn, Longhorn, and Pole Angus monsters had waddled their way along the circuit. A roar of laughter first went up from the crowd as he jauntily showed himself to best advantage—fat, it is true, but carrying his fatness like some scholars are said to carry their learning, not laboriously, but "lightly as a flower." Then the crowd showed quieter signs of genuine admiration. The bidding began, and rose to 210 guineas, but the proud owner refused to part with his little bull—and I hope he never regretted it, for among all the showy things there he quitted himself well.

Ther is always a large crowd around the judging of the Dexters, but, of course, this includes a great many moved by mere curiosity. The tendency, however, is for students of economy in agriculture to turn their attention to them, and this tendency has been going on now for several years. Upon this side of their character, I, for one, am willing that they shall stand or fall. Upon a holding of the size to carry three cows of the larger breeds, the holder starts with six Dexter cows, keeping his steers till they are just under three years old. He would "put forward" three heifers each year and have three steers to sell. Each year (with perfect luck) he would deal with twice the number of animals in the output of milk and beef that he would have in the larger breeds. In recording this output he would find that the quantity of milk or butter, and the quantity of beef, would be far in excess of that produced by the smaller number of large-sized beasts.

It is somewhat unfair to these small cattle that at milk-testing and carcase-showing competitions, this important question of relative size or weight, and consequently the relative cost of keep and production is persistently ignored.

In testing a cow for milk and cream, the weight of the animal should be taken into consideration, for, generally speaking, the weight will show the cost of maintenance. And when this is done the balance will turn heavily in favour of the Dexter above all other cattle. Likewise in beef production—weigh off the consumption of a large-breed steer and that of two little Dexter steers of the same age, and it will be found that the food of the two will be economical compared with that of the one, while the beef of the two will weigh more than that of the one. Then the offal also is small in these little animals—together their offal would not equal that of a big steer.

The Dexter has earned the title of the poor man's cow, and it justly deserves it. It is a curious thing, however, that up to lately in England it was owned almost exclusively by the rich. Its future is harking back to its origin, for around Killarney and on the Reeks its owners are anything but well to do. But for the Kerry and the Dexter they would be poorer still. What the Irish farmer loses by his casual methods, these little save by their economy. They are like the hard man in the parable, for ever taking up that they laid not down, and gathering where they did not straw.

There has been a good deal of adverse talk about the blemish the Dexter breed is supposed to suffer from—the dead and deformed calf. What breed of cattle is there that has not some drawback? When placed alongside of other breeds, the Dexter compares well in this respect. When a dead and deformed calf is born among Dexters, there is so much made of it that on account of its deformity (which is admittedly curious and repulsive), one would think it constituted something extraordinary in breeding experience. But this is not by any means the

only breed that has occasional dead calves. When further you place against this the absolute freedom from tuberculosis and the extreme rarity of abortion, the balance in healthy production is mostly on the side of the Dexter, as against any herd of cattle besides. In six years with a large herd of Dexters, the writer had no tuberculosis, no abortion, no "skinter," no death from disease, and only three dead calves; and in the latter cases the cows were quite well and milking freely in three days. The fact is the bulldog dead calf is a bogey-man, which has been allowed to terrify genteel demesne proprietors with agritural tastes long enough. With careful breeding on the one hand, and elimination of exaggeration on the other, the "bulldog" will not be heard of as a blemish at all.

If you take an extreme case (which is the worst I ever heard of) of a loss of 20 per cent. of dead calves in one year, you must, before drawing conclusions too rash, again remember that the percentage *must be halved* before making comparison with larger breeds of pure-bred cattle, for the loss of a Dexter calf is only half the loss of a larger one. Moreover, when the dead calf is born it is usually within a month or two months of its natural time, and the mother takes little harm from the birth, developing her full quantum of milk at the time when the calf should have been born. But all this is of interest only to the pedigree breeder, for in crossing there are no dead calves of this description. And what pure breed of cattle is there without its proportion of dead calves?

It is acknowledged by all that the Dexter is among the most shapely of all cattle, and for this reason they have until the last ten years been kept in England mostly as a "fancy" animal. Down to that time the owners of Dexters in England were generally people of liberal means,

who kept them in their parks or home-farms as ornaments, and they certainly adorn a large demesne as prettily and gracefully as any animal. Their miniature size, their symmetrical figure, the deep black interspersed with units of fiery red, the white milk-bags so often a feature of the cows, and the graceful curving of their lines all over the body, avoiding angularity on the one hand and rotund puffy circularity on the other—above all their sweetly animated but placid and kindly faces, with eyes of gentle and strong nerve, make them the pets of their owners and the admiration of the passer-by. But unfortunately these charming things have tended to become their snare. They are apt to be too well done. If the land is rich, too few have been kept for the acreage, and in time they have lost their natural hardiness, and even their comeliness, and their raison d'etre as a prolific and hardy but miniature beef-and-milk producer is thus imperilled. This petting and spoiling of the Dexter should, I think, be resisted by Judges in the Shows, for in doing so they will render the best service to this breed.

In Ireland these cattle are seen in their original setting, running about wild on the mountains, without shelter either in summer or winter, yielding their progeny and milk and beef in the rough and casual Irish style, as it is required; left to roam on the hills, mixed all in one herd—bulls, cows, heifers, steers, calves, yearlings. They are sent for as necessity demands, and down they come, helter-skelter, over rocks and brooks and scrubwood, literally hunted by dogs and men, into a yard, where the produce required is taken—milk from the cows, and a selection of killable cattle for beef, and back they go again, to roam in their wild fastnesses till the casual Irish owner repeats the process.

It will be seen at once, therefore, that the great characteristic of these animals is hardiness. They are probably the better for rough treatment with rough food. In store condition, of course, they should never be coddled or pampered, and here is the danger in the English herd of Dexters.

To carry the enquiry into the region of their colour will illustrate this point and make it more clear. There are three schools among us in respect of the colour of the Dexter. The prevailing one is that enunciated in the Herd-Book, which claims both black and red as of equal merit. This doctrine, of course, results in both colours being mixed in the various herds, with the necessary consequence that in every herd there is a proportion of beautifully shaped animals of "brindle" colour, totally disqualified for showing.

Another school which has not obtained authoritative voice seeks to eliminate the red, ultimately aiming at establishing black as the authoritative colour. Unfortunately these are met by the fact that the red in the Dexter is one of its prime characteristic features and was so recognized in the founders of the breed; and in practice it is found that in attempting to eliminate the red other distinct features tend to disappear, such as shortness of leg and thickness of body.

Hence there is arising a third school of breeders who advocate a greater and greater latitude in respect of colour, aiming simply at maintaining the characteristics of shape, hardiness, and utility, and thus following the example of breeders of the great English Shorthorns who have relegated colour completely into the background, and pay attention wholly to other qualities. If this principle were followed, the Dexter would in time become, (as some people even now describe it), "the miniature Shorthorn."

Whatever may be the ultimate working out of such details as these in the future of the Dexters, I, for one, feel that they matter only in a secondary way compared with the maintenance of their hardihood and economy, which is gaining them a high place among the profitable domestic animals of the world ; and I have no hesitation in saying that if once a farmer gets established with these hard and productive cattle, he will not change them for the larger and softer breeds. They support the old adage that " a thing of beauty is a joy for ever, " but they render greater service in these days when most farmers are feeling poor—they are " the poor man's Cow."

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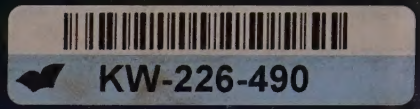
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